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Vol III No 1 FALL 2002

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REDITORIAL

Chas. Balun



"And, of course, the DVD release of the swaggering, hell-bent-for-splatter epic, *Story of Ricky*, will be a Red Letter day for all the R-Man's minions."



A long time ago, in a shitty, dinky multiplex far, far away, the idea for this magazine was born. I had just seen Stuart Gordon's *Re-Animator* (1985) in some shoebox-size theater in a ratty mall and I emerged a changed man. "That was the most fuckin' fun I'd had at a horror film since...since..." It didn't matter. This was *The One*.

I'd been a lifelong horror buff, old enough to have seen stuff like *20 Million Miles to Earth* (1957), *Earth vs. The Flying Saucers* (1956) and the original *House on Haunted Hill* (1958) on the big screen, so I was no mere piker easily swayed by even the hottest *splat du jour*. Arguably, *Re-Animator* was riding the crest of the '80s, an undeniable watershed period for the kind of films we wax poetically about within these pages. After the release of *Halloween* (1978) and *Dawn of the Dead* (1979) came *Friday the 13th* (1980) and *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (1984), and the contemporary horror film was once again redefined for a new generation. Italian splatter films splashed onto the big screen too, and *PastaLand* was well represented by the likes of *Suspina* (1977), *Zombie* (1979), *Seven Doors of Death* (1981), *The Gates of Hell* (1980) and the lowly, but lovable dead mutt of a movie, *Night of the Zombies* (1983). The VCR revolution was still around the corner, so if you missed a film during its theatrical run, you were usually shit out o' luck unless it played revival houses, midnight screenings, college film classes (where I saw *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) for the first time) or showed up cut-to-shreds on late night TV. I still vividly remember one 20-hour truck drive with a tranquilized cat, a puking dog and an incredulous missus, moving all of our shit from Oregon back to Orange County, so I could catch the last screening of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974) at some shit-hole theatre in Garbage Grove. I was one dedicated mofo! then. Truly. And fuckin' nuts, too, of course.

One of my first dates with the woman I would later marry was catching the premiere theatrical screening of *Friday the 13th*. We later attended, in the rain, the midnight (well, actually about 1:30 a.m.) West Coast premiere of *The Evil Dead* (1983) at the Los Angeles Filmex Festival. Soon after I began writing about what I'd seen my friends at FantaCo Enterprises, Inc. helped publish and distribute my first few books, including *Horror Holocaust* and *The Gore Score*. But soon, I sought a more immediate medium in which to reach others of my kind more quickly, and help spread the good (and bad) news about the Slippery Slopes of Splatter Nation.



into the future of the horror film? Fuck, man, it's anybody's guess. The most kickass splatter films released lately haven't even been horror films. *Blade* (1998) and its sequel *Blade II* (2002), were arguably the wettest around, perhaps ushering in a new mutant hybrid subgenre: the sci-fi/fantasy/action/kung fu/gore film. Some other films with high gore quotients like *Saving Private Ryan* (1998), *We Were Soldiers* (2002) and *Black Hawk Down* (2001) weren't even genre films at all. The real horror stuff, the balls-out, creepy-crawly shit, now seems to be blowing in on a roaring, ill wind from the Far East. Hong Kong, Japan, Korea and other Asian ports of putrescence have contributed some of the most vile, twisted, gore-drenched litany of depravity ever seen on film. The notorious *Gunga Pig* series was only the beginning. The envelope was pushed to bursting by the really rough stuff featured in such end of the millennium imports as *Atrocity*, *All Night Long*, *Dr. Lamb*, *The Untold Story*, *Run and Kill*, *Human Beasts*, *Organ* and *Uzumaki*. Some of the material seen here would get an American director yanked from his bed and lynched to a lamppost. Many of these films make *Last House on the Left* (1972) look like *Sesame Street*. The brutal world explored in many of these films is sometimes almost too terrible to ponder.

Re-Animator was the catalyst. It fuckin' rocked like nothing I had ever seen. From the opening frames, the frenzied action and bitchin' FX, ably punctuated by Richard Band's highly derivative but driving score, sucked me in for good. And held tight. After a simply delirious, chunkblowing grand guignol climax, I could feel the epiphany coming on. I was Born Again.

The very first issue of Deep Red magazine featured *Re-Animator* (natch) on the cover and led off with a frothing, fanboy tribute to one of my favorite flicks of all time. The issue was self-published in a limited edition of 666 copies by me and Chris Anourous, a cool-ass rock chick who worked for Eric Caidin at Hollywood Book & Poster Company. Chris also knew Joe Dante, a frequent visitor to the store, and asked him to write something for our very first issue. Joe was game. He wrote up a way cool interview he had recently conducted with *Godzilla* and we were now "Horror from the Heart of Hollywood." FantaCo Enterprises published all the issues of Deep Red through the early '90s, then dropped off the face of the earth. The magazine briefly mutated into the digest-sized Deep Red Alert for a couple of issues; came back as a full-on mag published by Blackest Heart Media in 1997; took a few years off, and now, a fuckin' 15th Anniversary issue! Who kept the goddamn fast forward button punched down so long and hard on this Crimson VCR of Life? Sheene-it.

Lots of blood and other shit under the bridge now. So, after all this, maybe you're expecting a grand summation of all things red, wet and wild? A sober, clear-eyed look



"These people are self-absorbed, megalomaniacal loan sharks with hefty expense accounts who think Dario Argento is some form of free-range pasta salad."

The flurry of genre activity on these shores is perhaps most noticeable in the mad scramble and ensuing feeding frenzy by numerous stateside companies seeking to nab any and all remaining European titles from the Golden Age of Pastaland Splat (say 1972-1987). The slick repackaging of these titles and the cool, though often exhausting, bonus features included are, at times, so impressive as to completely obscure the often worthless nature of some of the titles. *Hell of the Living Dead* (1983) (aka *Night of the Zombies*) simply does not deserve to look as good as it does. However, special editions of *Suspina*, *The Beyond* (1980), *Bad Taste* (1987), *Cannibal Apocalypse* (1980) and *The Evil Dead* are welcome additions to any Collector's Corner. The bar has now been raised considerably in assessing these titles must-have factor.

Though perhaps falling just shy of the lofty appeal of these blueblood titles, funky-assed shit like *Zombie Holocaust* (1982) (aka *Dr. Butcher, M.D.*), *Burial Ground* (1989) and even the real bad dog of the pack, *Hell of the Living Dead*, heralds a most welcome return of the Italian Cannibal Zombie tradition. And, of course, regardless of just *what fuckin' genre* it belongs to, the DVD release of the swaggering, hell-bent-for-splatter epic, *Story of Ricky* (1991), will be a Red Letter day for all the R-Man's minions.

Another stateside hotbed of genre activity seems to be focused on the production, marketing and distribution of a plethora of ultra-gory, shot-on-video (ahem...digital video), backyard crap-shoots, frequently starring self-anointed "Scream Queens" you've never ever heard of. You can usually buy an exclusive, nipple-print coffee mug online too, if you stay for all the bonus extras. The Do-It-Yourself punk ethos of many of these efforts is to be applauded, of course, but most of 'em deserve to be flushed with extreme prejudice. Despite a record number of backyard natures practicing their chops, there seems scant evidence of any one, young Turk able to stir the faithful and knock our collective wazooes in the dirt akin to freshman efforts like Sam Raimi's *The Evil Dead*, Peter Jackson's *Bad Taste*, Clive Barker's *Hellraiser* (1987) (sort of) or even Richard Stanley's *Hardware* (1990). And, isn't it just a wee bit ironic that Raimi's latest projects have been a baseball valentine, *For Love of the Game* (2000); a surreal, misfired western, *The Quick and the Dead* (1995); a tepid, nourish thriller, *A Simple Plan* (1998) and now *Spider-Man* (2002)? And now that Peter Jackson's delivered one of the biggest, grandest and most overfed cinematic cash cows of the new millennium, *The Lord of the Rings* (2001), has anyone else noticed that his new, improved resume conspicuously omits any mention of Jackson's Holy Trinity: *Bad Taste*, *Moon of the Feebles* (1990) and *Braindead* (1993)? The pundits do occasionally mention *Heavenly Creatures* (1994), though, mostly because Kate Winslet's career later crested as an overripe Titanic twat.



It's a foofy game to forecast what Red Tides may lie ahead, because everything seems so fragmented, directionless, terminally cynical or completely immune to criticism. The long-delayed release of *Jeep X* (2002) only confirms these suspicions. And, they still will not let go of the *Jeep vs Freddy* (supposedly to be directed by Rob Bottin) film threat. Horror fans have grown up, but those making the movies still take dead aim on the 14-year-old, testosterone-soaked, cinematic retard as a target for their swill.

While earnest, well-executed mainstream efforts like *The Sixth Sense* (1999), *The Others* (2001), *Panic Room* (2002) and *The Devil's Backbone* (2001) have delivered expertly modulated thrills, I cannot think of one recent film that has unified and electrified Horror Nation like an *Evil Dead*, *Braindead* or *Hellraiser* did, with the promise there would be more, *much* more to come. The best horror film I've seen on the big screen in the last ten years has been the digitally remastered reissue of *The Exorcist* (1973).

Yes, it is bitchin', indeed, that besides an avalanche of '80s-era DVD spectaculars released every month, cable stations like Independent Film Channel routinely play uncut, letterboxed prints of such splatter staples as *Dawn of the Dead*, *Re-Animator*, *Braindead*, *Sawdust*, *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* and *They Came from Within* (1975). But is pre-packaged nostalgia, no matter how piquant and satisfying, really enough? And really, no matter how sweet it may be, will a densely packed Director's Special Edition

***Re-Animator**
was the catalyst.
It fuckin' rocked
like nothing I had
ever seen. I was
born again."



Two Disc Set of Rob Zombie's highly touted *House of 1000 Corpses* (2007) really change anything? He's a millionaire Rock God selling out arenas and partying with other Metal Diebies while headlining the annual Ozfest. Despite a positive buzz and great word-of-mouth, *House of 1000 Corpses* has been sitting on a shelf (Universal's, Zombie's, maybe Anchor Bay's) for way too long. It's a little, ragtaggy horror flick, made for peanuts, that will have to "R" rated to be seen by anybody. NC-17 films as well as unrated ones, especially horror films, rarely, if ever, make a significant score at the box office. So what's the delay? Does it really matter? It's just more of the same ol' show business shit. As in: "You know, Bunky, there's no show without the business." Filmmaking is a very expensive procedure; so is the marketing and distribution of a finished movie. Investors, who've just dumped millions of dollars of their money in a project, don't tell the director to "Just make art, son. Follow your instincts. We trust you and you'll get final cut." Fuck, these people are self-absorbed, megalomaniacal loan sharks with hefty expense accounts who think Dario Argento is some form of free-range pasta salad. They do not want you to gamble foolishly with their money. No sir. Because *House of a 1000 Corpses* is a violent, sadistic, nihilistic horror film, its value in the Great American Marketplace is compromised. Especially after The Event. The disingenuous, grief-stricken All-American Victim cries, "Do we need even more horror in our lives?"



Puh-leeeeeeze. The Political Correctness Quotient these days can make even limp dick posers like N Sync seem like Hitler Youth. So where's the next great horror flick? You follow the money, pard.

It's a fact that horror fans now have unprecedented and seemingly unlimited opportunities via the Internet, websites, message boards, chat rooms and eBbay, to discuss, critique, argue, sell and collect the bloody goods. But is simple commerce enough to keep the genre alive and vital? Or is this just another way for us to play spectator and not participant? To merely sit on the sidelines, watching—and keeping score?

"Of the few truths this resolute cynic and naysayer has retained over five goddamned decades is the unshakeable belief that one person can change everything. Forever."

The recent tragic death of punk pioneer Joey Ramone came at a time when he was still most passionate about this thing—this rock & roll—that he loved more than anything else. After nearly 30 years of keeping the faith, never becoming really wealthy or really famous (despite The Ramones recent induction into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame), Joey Ramone delivered his first and sadly, last solo album before dying from complications of cancer at age 49. This album, with its clarity, passion and heartfelt dedication to the absolute truth of his calling, will remain both a memorial and a testimonial. Your heart can't help but break when Ramone rails in one song against his deteriorating condition:

*"Sitting in a hospital bed,
I I want life
I want my life
I got knocked down, but I'll get up"*

The Ramones played really fast. And loud. They knew these chords. Their exuberant spirit launched a 1000 guitar-driven garage bands. But along with their seemingly simple progressions and rock solid 4/4 beats, they gave us the truth. They stripped rock & roll down to its essence, removed the artifice and pretentiousness, and fuckin' rocked...hard! And today, groups like Green Day, Blink 182, the White Stripes, Sum 41, The Strokes, Black Rebel Motorcycle Club and wildman Andrew W.K. continue to reinvent and revitalize rock music. The chords may be the same, but any capable artist will make them seem new, exciting and inspiring once again. A lesson here, perhaps?

Passion, commitment and faith in oneself can move mountains, raise the dead and rock this fucking planet. Of the few truths this resolute cynic and naysayer has retained over five goddamned decades is the unshakeable belief that one person can change everything. Forever. Fuck the Pope, the President, world religions, global politics, economic indicators and The Way It's Supposed To Be. Up yours, dead man.

We need to get back to the game again, but with a renewed passion and commitment to the task at hand. Farth will plant the seeds. Use those well-strummed three chords, add a dose of truth, and really mean it. But this time...we play to win.

Chas. Balun
Fall 2002

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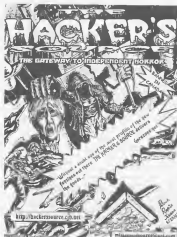
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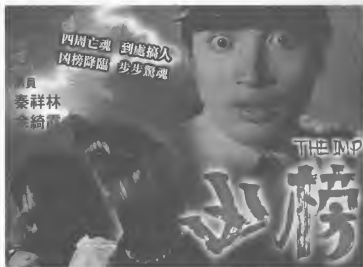
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THE BEAST MOVES EAST

Graphic, nihilistic horror films find a welcome home in the Orient...for better or worse.



by Greg Goodsell

Graphic, nihilistic horror films find a welcome home in the Orient — is this a good thing?

A haughty fashion model sits at a table in a darkened room. A misshapen deformed figure sits at the other end of the table, swathed in shadows. "Where's papa ... ?" wails the figure in a distorted voice. "He hasn't come home!" is the model's curt reply as the audience deduces that the deformed young man and attractive young woman are brother and sister. A stern looking nun glares at the sister's imperious nature, and decides to teach her a lesson in humility.

The deformed young man demonstrates how the institution has taught him how to make a cup of tea. The audience sees his hands, covered with boils and lesions fumble with a cup and lumps of sugar as he prepares some "hands on" refreshment for his sister. Under the watchful guise of the nun, the mortified young woman gulps down the concoction. Unable to control her revulsion for one more instant, the girl jumps from the table and projectile vomits out of a nearby window. The nun's stony countenance nearly cracks as a malicious smile spreads across her face.

The opening titles of *The Rape After* (Yin Zhong, 1986 aka *Licentious Seed*) haven't finished by the time this grisly episode takes place. The audience wonders if the following feature will be able to top this scene in terms of horrific nausea. The audience's worst expectations are fulfilled several times before the film sputters to a bleak conclusion some 90-minutes later.

We've stumbled into the world of Hong Kong Category III horror, a designation that is strictly adults only in terms of violence, theme and content. Checky action stars and men in flowing silk robes are nowhere to be found as these films focus almost exclusively on the modern world's propensity for ugly, violent death and terrifying retribution. Those expecting irony and humor inherent in cut-rate production values and bad dubbing found in chop-sockey cinema are advised to look elsewhere ... far, far away.

The Hong Kong Category III film most familiar with western viewers remains *The Untold Story* (Bo Xian Fan Dian Zhi Ren Rou Cha Shao Bo, 1992, also known as *Burnman*, *Honour Meat Pies*, *Honour Pork Chop*). Updating the Sweeney Todd story to modern Hong Kong, *Untold Story* tells the tale of a ruthless restaurateur who brutally murders his competition, business partners and everyone who crosses his path to provide dim sum for the next day's customers. Detectives investigating the disappearance of his partner's family finally pry a confession from him after a series of tortures. In the film's horrific high point, the mad businessman recounts how he chopped and mutilated his partner's family in an orgy of bloodletting. The western cinematic taboo of depicting child murder is gleefully trampled and stomped upon as wailing little girls are forced to watch mom, pop, brother and sister hacked to oblivion before meeting the wrong end of a meat cleaver.

The Untold Story is a scorching, with intense per-

formances and realistic violence. *Untold Story* is even more effective if the viewer lives in a metro area full of slummy Chinese restaurants lorded over by awful proprietors exactly like those found in the film. What many complacent American viewers generally don't know is that there are countless more films just like *The Untold Story* from Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan. Does this revelation inspire dread? Jubilation? More than casual interest? Interested readers are advised to strap on their hip boots...

MULTI-CULTURAL MUTILATIONS

Cities with strong Oriental populations are sure to have a few specialty shops specializing in videos and discs from Asia. Many are found in the VCD format, the DVD's poorer relation that spreads out a film on two discs with no extras or chapter stops. Playable on most American DVD players, the quality of the VCD has limitations, such as occasional bitmapping and visual grain. But trust me, the films in this article aren't about visual gloss.

This phenomenon has resulted in a flood of Oriental horror titles glutting the domestic market. The prolific film industries of Hong Kong and Japan guarantee several new titles a month for expatriate audiences. As expected, many of these films are of admitted low quality. Art Black in his "Damned and Dented" column in *Psychotronic Video* magazine once exclaimed that the Hong Kong spooker *The Ximp* (1998) appeared to have taken less than 18 hours to film. Quite a few other VCDs this writer has seen appear to have been completed in less time than it took to watch them! Kneecr-jerk special effects, improvised storylines and a demand for product above all else means that a vast majority of these discs are unwatchable.

The good news to many horror fans is that these films more than make up for their shortcomings in terms of sheer attitude. It's hard to believe that at one time American cinema yielded such nasty shockers as *Last House On The Left* (1972) or *Fight For Your Life* (1977), cheap, uncompromised shockers that tested the audience's limits. Recent domestic attempts at unrelenting horror such as *Scen* (1995) and *Scen* (1999) trafficked mostly in designer despair minus the needed grit. Oriental horrors in contrast are unapologetic in finding new ways to smash boundaries and taboos. The least of these films are certain to hit the seasoned viewer with a sucker punch.

ASIAN BLUE-LIGHT SPECIALS VS. CEILING TILE TERRORS

When shopping at the Asian VCD store for horror discs, one becomes aware of two separate distinct genres. Dubbed by one avid devotee as "Asian Blue-Light Specials," Oriental horror films with a supernatural bent usually feature a revenge plotline, such as spurned lovers striking back at each other through magic spells and incantations with scenes lit in a chill blue light. "Blue-Light Specials" tend to be very slapdash and made for no money,

with Silent Movie-era special effects and juvenile attempts at humor. The exceptions to this rule are the more subtle and sophisticated approaches to the traditional ghost story, such as Japan's *Ring* series.

The second horror genre Asian titles fall into - the ones involving maniacs, madmen and mutilation are henceforth called "Ceiling Tile Terrors." These films are always set in decaying urban areas, full of sociopath characters, in buildings with missing or stained ceiling tiles. These films are a sure bet, with lots of action, an eagerness to overstep proprieties of good taste coupled with an overwhelming atmosphere of chaos and violent death.

This is not to say that these two genres never overlap. Far from it, even the most fanciful ghost stories take place in the cold, cruel modern world. For example, *The Imp* (Xiong Bung, 1981) is a Lucio Fulci-inspired spook show involving a haunted high-rise. The film follows the travails of a young man who must take a job as a security guard in order to provide for his pregnant wife. He goes to apply when he notices a ruckus at an employment agency. "What happened to the supervisor?" he asks. A smiling office drone replies, "He went to meet Jesus Christ!" as a bullet-ridden corpse on a gurney is wheeled out.

Since most VCD's are priced at around \$10 to \$15, should the consumer encounter one with ghosts or a leering psycho with an axe on the cover ... they should just up and buy both of them! Live a little.

VERY CREATIVE

If good taste truly is the enemy of creativity, then Hong Kong horror films are a truly creative lot. Subject matter that even the trust-fund artists of the so-called Cinema of Transgression movement would never dare attempt some of the stories proffered by this feisty island nation.

One Hong Kong horror flick with a small stateside cult following is *Red To Kill* (Ruo Sha, 1994, aka *Feeble Killer*). This charming exercise apparently uses real mentally retarded and brain-damaged individuals to fill out its tiny cast. The absurd story is about a beautiful moron who is left orphaned and must be institutionalized. A mild-mannered doctor (Ben Ng) at the hospital just so happens to a rapist killer who becomes inflamed at the sight of the color red. While the girl rehearses for a dance recital, the doctor spies her red panties and is sent into a fugue state. Shaving his head and donning striped leotards, "the sex lupine" and the girl engage in a go-for-broke showdown.

Red To Kill would be truly offensive if it wasn't so terribly dense. The pretty heroine makes for a very unlikely mentally challenged person as she can memorize elaborate dance routines and is far too limber to fit in with her thick-tongued, drooling developmentally disabled friends at the hospital. Taking itself very seriously and drenching its improbable story in high melodrama, *Red To Kill* is an instant camp classic.

Another excessive, over-the-top Hong Kong feature is *Ebola Syndrome* (*Yibola Bung Da*, 1996). Directed

"These films are a sure bet, with lots of action, an eagerness to overstep proprieties of good taste coupled with an overwhelming atmosphere of chaos and violent death."



by Herman Yau, some have claimed it is a knowing parody of *The Untold Story*. As in the previous film, *Syndrome* follows a murderous restaurant worker who hastily relocates to South Africa after a series of murders. Gathering bits of dead wildlife in the outback to provide "pork chops" for unknowing restaurant patrons, the villain casually rapes a tribeswoman thrashing on the ground in the midst of a fit. She douses him with vomit before dying, and the rapist contracts the dreaded Ebola syndrome, which he takes back to Hong Kong to infect the local prostitute population.

Syndrome doesn't come within a country mile of being realistic biological horror as found in *The Andromeda Strain* (1971) and *Outbreak* (1995). The victims don't feel poorly or under the weather before they become foaming-at-the-mouth maniacs as seen in David Cronenberg's *Rabid* (1975). The prostitute prey of the villain just shrumpily fall o the floor and start twitching while getting their hair done at the beauty parlor.

Syndrome's real raison d'arte appears to be the scenes where the disgruntled bad guy vents his frustration on unknowing restaurant patrons by sabotaging their meals with low-grade germ warfare, by urinating, spitting and much much worse in the following day's cream pies. As a former restaurant employee, let me assure the reader that this is not even the tip of a very dirty iceberg.

There's no shortage of graphic horror films from Japan. One would think that nation's prestigious entertainment industry produces little else. Japanese cinema runs the gamut of elegant period pieces featuring the torture, mutilation and murder of women; shot-on-video cheapies featuring the torture, mutilation and murder of women; and adorable animated cartoons depicting the torture, mutilation... etc.

The good news for viewers of this bent would appear to be the release of the noxious *Guinea Pig* series in a limited edition DVD boxed set. Be the envy of your friends! Cause consternation amongst the neighbors! Wind up on some FBI list...

Book-length treatises have been written on this special "cultural indicator." One film scholar pitifully dismisses these films as "Japan sharing its unfortunate sexual predilections with the rest of the world."

All the same, two Japanese features warrant our attention: *Gol! Gol! Second Time Virgin!* (*Take Yaku Nidome No Shoyo*, 1969). Directed by Koji Wakamatsu, *Second Time Virgin* is a real curio from the Summer of Hate, an indictment of the young and why they need to stay locked up in the military or community college until they're at least 25. Set entirely on the rooftop of a Tokyo high-rise, *Virgin* begins on a high note with the gang rape of a helpless teenage girl. A bespectacled young man (Michio Akiyama) watches without emotion but does not participate. The gang leaves her for dead and the following morning she admits to the young boy that this isn't the first time

she's been raped. Since it's a morning for revealing secrets, the boy takes her to his apartment to show that he's a recent mass murderer who brutally murdered four people after he declined to join in their orgy!

Seeing as they both share a common background of shared sexual abuse, the two become fast friends. Discussing the emptiness of modern life, the gang we saw at the beginning returns to the rooftop come nightfall. The boy, no longer a "virgin" to mass slaughter kills them all one by one. The young lovers then laugh joyously drenched in blood. With nowhere to go but down, they do the most logical thing for teenage nihilists stuck on the roof of a Tokyo high-rise. *Second Time Virgin's* last shot seems to deliberately to tweak the noses of future generations to grow up under the admonishment of "just say no."

A 65-minute-long wail of despair, *Second Time Virgin* hammers home the truth that more than just youth is wasted on the young.

A more recent attempt at duplicating *Virgin's* despairing vibe is the shot-on-video *Atrocity 2: All Night Long* (*Goru Naito Rongu 2: Sanji*, 1995). While it piles on the horror, the overall effect is one of ennui. Written and Directed by Katsuya Matsumura, *All Night Long* focuses on a teenage bookworm pressured to join a gay youth gang. Why these Simpering Sons of Yukio Mishima lust after our hero is unclear. Fat with thick glasses, he calls to mind the junior high school student who took first place in the science fair after letting hamburgers collect mould in his bedroom over



summer vacation. The youth gang's chief activity is -- need we say it? -- the torture, mutilation and murder of women. One lovely lotus blossom has her nails ripped out before being tossed in a Dumpster.

Our retiring friend eventually takes a stand against the gang in an orgy of bloodletting in a fashionable home. The clincher? Our studious friend discovers a young couple making conventional love in a bed, and then brutally kills them. "So meaningless .. meaningless," he mutters as the film grinds to a halt. No argument there, pal.

An interminable hour in length, *Atrocity 2: All Night Long* is an atrocity that only seems to last all night long.

TWO FROM SOUTH KOREA

Weighing in from South Korea is the grisly *Tell Me Something* (1999). Directed by Yoon-Hyun Chang, *Something* is an elegantly composed and photographed film that smacks the viewer in the face with a gory severed arm hacked off from an inert, unwilling donor in the first five minutes. A rash of mutilation murders has been plaguing the city of Seoul. Professional men have been turning up in plastic garbage bags dismembered with certain vital parts ... missing. Further pathological investigations indicate that the victims were all anesthetized into paralysis, and had their



limbs chopped off while they were still conscious. Shades of *Gummo Pig*?

Three of the victims had been earlier involved with a young ingénue (Eun-ha Shim). A detective (Suk-kyu Han) brooding over the recent death of his mother is assigned to the case, and the plot sickens. *Something* has a showstopper sure to send any gorehound's heart fluttering that takes place in the first 12 minutes. In a crowded elevator full of screaming children and young women, a bratty child sends

a grocery cart into one of those ubiquitous garbage bags, and ... far from this reviewer to spoil it. For some, this scene alone will be worth the price of admission. As the tagline for the English language version of this film puts it, "Murder is a terrible thing ... and is better left unsolved."

Even stronger fare is served up in *The Isle* (Seom, 2000). Director Ki-dak Kim plops the viewer in a claustrophobic, hopeless universe that the followers of Asian horror cinema have come to know and love. Set entirely on a lake, *The Isle* focuses on the fishermen and occasional prostitutes who ply their trade on their houseboats. A mute, nameless, stony-faced prostitute (Suh Jung) has accepted the fact that the male of the species is little more than life-support systems for their penises and treats her tricks with undisguised contempt. She even finds time to slap around her faithful German shepherd dog. Her circular existence is disrupted with the arrival of a loser fisherman bent on suicide who attracts her attention by not showing the slightest bit of sexual interest in her. Every young man will encounter a woman like this in the course of his dating careers ...

Finding this lachrymose whiner irresistible, she murders a competing prostitute in a way that will rattle many with its utter callousness. The most hardened viewer will be dashing from the room when the couple begins to test the limits of their devotion by inserting fishhooks where they have no business going. Such a setup does not bode for a traditional Hollywood-style ending, and none is offered. *The Isle* calls to mind the rock 'n' roll oldie from Nazareth that reiterates, "Ooooooh-oooooh .. love hurts."

CREEPING WESTERN INFLUENCES

A large part of Asian horror's appeal is its insular, parochial logic that doesn't throw any bones to the western viewer. The usually complacent couch potato is tossed into a foreign environment and is left without a map to figure a way out.

A few Hong Kong horrors still betray a western influence, as in the case of *Horror Hotline -- Big Head Monster* (Hang Bo Yu Sin, 2001), which borrows liberally from TV's *The X-Files* and *The Blair Witch* (1994). *Hotline* starts prosaically enough with an American film crew filming a documentary on a Hong Kong radio talk show that deals with psychic phenomena. A listener calls in and talks about a bigheaded baby he saw as a child in a park lavatory, and then hangs

"The most hardened viewer will be dashing from the room when the couple begins to test the limits of their devotion by inserting fishhooks where they have no business going."

up. The intrepid reporters comb through newspaper accounts and find a reported incident of a group of six boys seeing a mutant child with their teacher many years ago. Tracking down the teacher, they discover that he has suffered a stroke and is unable to talk -- and then dies almost immediately afterwards.

The journalists then interview a retired nurse who recalls how the birth of a baby brought scientists and government officials to the maternity wing of the hospital where she worked, and how the incident was shrouded in top secrecy. Further investigations find that all six boys, since grown to adulthood have been mysteriously murdered. We catch glimpses of the wailing mutant child in flashbacks, the suspense, tension and Lovecraftian dread builds and builds and builds AND THEN ... the viewer is presented with two separate endings to choose from on the disc. And guess what? Neither one is acceptable. Both recall Hong Kong horror at its most knee jerk and no-budget. The Best Horror Film of 2001 goes down in flames in the space of two to three minutes before the viewer's disbelieving eyes.

This author's choice for all-time Asian horror film classic goes to the aforementioned *The Rape After*. Made quickly for no money like all modern classic horror films, it staggers from excessive supernatural grue to mundane, everyday terrors. Worked into its overheated storyline are car wrecks, murders, rapist demons, monster fetuses, curses, black magic, jealousy, deformity divorce, abortion, murder ... If there are any audience members who fail to get the point, a Buddhist monk (usually the savior in most Hong Kong horror films) is set on fire by flaming birds prior to being thrown from a window. *The Rape After* is the "King Lear" of its genre. Just as that Shakespearean play takes place in an England 100 years before the birth of Christ, *The Rape After* likewise offers no salvation.

Confronted by an inexhaustible array of "feel bad favorites" from Asia, fans that like their horror straight up with no chaser of post-modern irony are advised that for the time being, The Beast now resides in the East.

The author wishes to thank Kevin Varga for his considerable help in providing many of the films mentioned in this article.

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HAND IT TO REMO



The Adventure Continues...

by

Shane M. Dallmann

Just so you never feel that there's nothing you can count on, Remo Q. is still archiving the best hand-removal scenes from films around the world—and while it's been a long time since one's impressed me like the show-stopper in *Flesh For Frankenstein*, I've come across at least four significant examples since the last time I published my findings...

1. MOST PAINFUL HAND REMOVAL: No contest here—it's the "wrenching" moment from *The Wax Mask*.

2. MOST UNDERRATED HAND REMOVAL: Anybody remember *Evil Clutch*? It's an original moment indeed when a hapless (and soon to be handless) fellow gets both manual extremities brutally smashed off by a boulder wielded by a demonic villainess. The resulting blood loss caused a friend to ask me "How could he still be alive?" "Bests me," I replied. "I'm stumped!"

3. CELEBRITY HAND REMOVAL: Bruce Qern in the prologue of *Hush*. *Hush*, *Sweet Charlotte*. How could I have missed that one earlier?

4. CELEBRITY CHOICE HAND REMOVAL: Clive Barker himself tipped me off to the best hand-removal in a non-horror film—one in *Texas Bulbe*. As an enemy warlord (posing as an ally) has his troops attempt to subjugate those of Yul Brynner, he makes the mistake of literally pointing out his activities with a greedily outstretched arm. Brynner's immediate response is non-verbal, and I'm sure you get the "point," as well.

As always, more to come.

Meanwhile, here's a true story for the faithful. I was recently disturbed during a writing session by a phone solicitor who purported to represent a certain "Child Protection" organization, and who claimed that some person that neither my wife nor I had ever heard of had given them our names. "We feel that there is too much profanity, nudity and violence in television and movies today," said the lady. "May we assume that you share that point of view?" "Actually," I replied, "you picked the absolute worst person to call. Now if you'll excuse me, I have to get back to my screenplay and put in the porno scene. Good-bye." All right, maybe that wasn't exactly what I was working on at the moment, yet it seemed quite the right thing to say. But then came a first (for me)—the phone rang again, and I was curious (and annoyed) enough to actually answer. This time, it was a male voice on the other end, asking me if it was "an anal scene" that I was writing! Momentarily fazed, I couldn't come up with the appropriate zinger (which would have been "Talk to casting."), so I replied with the truth—that I simply had no patience whatsoever for phone solicitors or censorship groups. His scholarly retort? "Yeah, well, fuck you!" So... who's looking out for the welfare of YOUR children? "...and may you never lose sight of the fun of it all."

Every year, these words conclude the Halloween address I offer my on-line friends, and I mean them as sincerely as any words I've ever uttered. We know that a dyed-in-the-wool horror fan can't be made to change his stripes even during a genre run as miserable as that of the movie-going year 2000. But to lose the pleasurable in-

"We know that a dyed-in-the-wool horror fan can't be made to change his stripes even during a genre run as miserable as that of recent years."

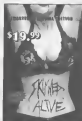
toxication that derives from simply being a fan? Could that happen? Perhaps—if one felt that he was truly the only one left in the world. Not likely. But it's frustrating enough that new viewers, deprived as they are of the fantastic television packages (and inherent historical context) we grew up with, find less and less reason to seek out the films that meant the most to us, and continue to accept the newest, most derivative rereleases as truly groundbreaking shockers. What to do?

Well, if you have a public access cable outlet in your area, take the initiative and become one of a breed that's otherwise close to extinct: be a HORROR HOST! It's fun, it's surprisingly easy, and you'd be surprised at the number of "public domain and/or unlicensed for purpose of U.S. copyright law" titles you can introduce to an unsuspecting audience! While you can't do commercials, you can still do the show the old-fashioned way. Break your movies into segments. Interperse them with character bits and plenty of relevant trivia. Play it straight or play it funny—but if the window is there for you, play it! Who knows where it may lead? If the idea holds any appeal to you at all, I'd be happy to tell you more: drop me a line at remod88@hotmail.com.

Until next time!

Since 1991, Shane M. Dallmann's reviews and articles have regularly appeared in such publications as *FANGORIA*, *DEEP RED*, *PSYCHOTRONIC VIDEO*, *BLOOD TIMES*, *VIDEO JUNKIE* and the on-line *IMAGES JOURNAL*. He is currently a regular contributor to *VIDEO WATCHDOG*. Recently, he served as co-writer/co-director with Christo Rospolo of Labcoat Productions on the feature *FLESH EATERS*, while his hook-handed alter ego hosts the weekly creature feature show *REMO Q. IS MANDR Q. OF MAYHEM* on his local cable station. He lives with his wife Lisa, their daughter Rebecca and their son Cameron in Marina, California.

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An Actor's Journal

Inside the

HOUSE of 1000 CORPSES

By Bill Moseley



Between May and June of 2000, I starred as Otis P. Firefly in a horror movie written & directed by Rob Zombie called *House of 1000 Corpses*. During the course of the six-week shoot, I had plenty of down time- or "trailer time," as I like to call it- to scribble my thoughts & feelings in a Rugrats notebook, and I'm happy to share some of them with the fearless readers of Deep Red Magazine.

House of 1000 Corpses has not been without controversy. It began as a Universal picture, shot mostly on the Universal back lot under the watchful eye of various Universal executives. But when the big brass got a load of the more or less finished product (minus final soundtrack), they recoiled as if from a flame and cast us out of the Monster Studio.

It's been a long two years. Rob Zombie finally bought *House* from Universal, and after a nine-month joust with the MPAA, he secured an "R" rating, insuring us a broad theatrical release. As of this writing (May 8, 2002), Rob is still negotiating with potential distributors (it now appears that MGM has the inside track) but nonetheless expects *House* to be in a theatre near you by this coming Halloween.

House of 1000 Corpses is a glorious, "gore-tour" throwback to the kick-ass horror films of the '70's. It's rude, it's rough, it's down and dirty, and that's why we ended up east of Eden. But, hell, what did you expect from a man named Rob Zombie, *Scream 4* (shudder!)?!

House stars such horror luminaries as Sid (*Spider Baby*) Haig, Karen Black (*Trilogy of Terror*) and Tommy Towles ("Otis" in *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer*). My pedigree includes Choptop in *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2*, Johnny in the color remake of *Night of the Living Dead* and Rocky, the Santa Claus killer, in *Silent Night, Deadly Night 3*. We all know and love horror, and we love Rob and his beautiful girlfriend, Sheri Moon, who plays my sister, Baby.



Movie-making isn't easy. The hours are long, the waiting is grueling and the work is a mountain to climb every time you step in front of the camera. But in spite of all that, and because of it, I have to say that making "House" was not only a labor of love (I mean, we did get paid), but a real pleasure as well. Here, then, are my notes in all of their scrambled, rambling glory, and please pass the popcorn.

12:25 am 5/15/2000 Monday Day 1

Just finishing up compiling my 90-minute cassette of Otis music, culled mostly from my ragged LP collection- lots of blues, C&W, swamp music w/ sprinkles of Blue Oyster Cult, Captain Beefheart's "Safe As Milk," and the Doors' "Build Me a Woman" from "Absolutely Live." Cats on the balcony, fly-swatter clock in bathroom ticking down toward my noon call time over the hill in Burbank at Universal Studios.

Nice to get an encouraging call tonight from Tobe

Hooper [*Texas Chainsaw Massacre* director] & his son, Tony! Tobe urged me to kick some butt; I told him that I was fired up and rarin' to go, and I am, dammit! I've read the script 30 times, spent hours in open-eyed meditation imagining who I am and what I'm doing. "We're all creatures of God and freaks in our own way," says Otis, and that's a Big Amen to that, brothers & sisters!

9am

Good sound sleep, up to feed pets, clean the goldfish bowl, check on my pitiful socks as I sip Costa Rican coffee & hormone-free milk. I figure I'll book out of here by 11:15, make it to the Universal parking lot by 11:45, surprise 'em by being fifteen minutes early!

Since it's always a good idea to break a sweat before a long workday, I slip on my rotten old sneakers, grab shorts & a tee out of the dirty clothes basket and jog a couple of miles 'round the neighborhood. Huff, puff, huff, huff. Shower? Sil Deodorant? No way! I want to make sure Otis stinks, want to ripen up the wardrobe.

I've been on a self-inflicted diet for the past few weeks to drop 4, 5 pounds. Otis is a skinny fuck, and even though I normally weigh a mere 173 pounds, 166'd be even creepier. So I've been eating mostly protein- chicken breasts, egg whites, beef patties, cottage (shudder!) cheese- and today's no exception. I defrost my last burger in the toaster oven, sniff-test the cottage curds, liven them up with a squirt of Italian dressing, dust off a slice of whole wheat bread & wash it all down with some juicer juice (pineapple, old pear, brows banana).

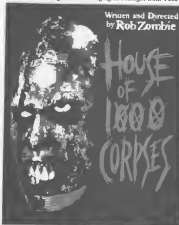
It's been a long time since I starred in a feature film, but I'm not nervous- hey, it's who I am, it's what I do! Just suit up and show up, get into costume & makeup, give myself to the story and get out of the way! This ain't about a nervous actor trying to remember lines, it's about Otis P. Firefly, sibino, artist, killer, carnival!

5pm

In costume & makeup since 1:30pm, and here it is five, and I've yet to utter a line, shoot even one cop or chop up a single teen. I'm in my trailer listening to my Otis tape, kind of groggy & soggy; napped some, went over today's scene a few more times- ooooh, cool breeze & Steve Earle singing. "It's all over when your time runs out."

The Universal set is awesome- so many deliciously twisted details inside & out of my home sweet home! Baby dolls nailed to the wall to the right of the frost door, jack-o-lanterns in the windows, animal heads & skins everywhere, bone sculptures, skulls, skeletons, rusty tools, cages with live chickens, dusty meat cuts creaking from ceiling chains out in the smoke house. And to think that this place was once the *Best Little Whorehouse in Texas*!

Rob is so enthusiastic, so cool, calm, unflappable. He's having a great time, and it's infectious. We're shooting right off a main road here on the Universal back lot, and every five minutes another tram-load of tourists grinds by, craning necks, snapping pictures of our real live freak show!



Nice here in my comfortable trailer (a five-minute walk from the set), beautiful warm breezy day in southern California, wind soothing & sizzling through a green wall of pines & eucalyptus. Through the trees, a bird's eye view of the San Gabriel Mountains, majestic beneath a big white herd of cumulus clouds easing north through light blue skies.

Billy Gibbons powers his way through "Got Me Under Pressure" from ZZ Top's "Eliminator." Maybe that's a little after Otis' time, but I know he'd love that Texas beat. And I'm a wrap; this day is history, and I haven't worked a lick. I'm back tomorrow at 12:30pm to try it again.

Makeup notes: Wayne Toth decides to change the albino white makeup; he'll have to use adhesive-based Pax because my white wig and muttonchops ain't sticking too well to the water-base. Too bad because clean up'll take longer & rather than water to clean me off he'll have to use Detachol!

5:30pm 5/17 Wednesday-

Been here since 3pm, first to arrive, bung out in my trailer listening to a cassette of Fela Kuti. In the past two and a half hours I've gotten in costume, makeup, gotten my contacts in only to lose them fifteen minutes later due to a change of [production] plans. Teamster Jennifer told me that the Director of Photography's been replaced.

As I walked past a parked truck with a half-eaten cheeseburger in my hand, the teamster behind the wheel - with tomato relish on his chest - was coming out of a major seizure! He was in a daze; a fellow teamster was shaking him, asking him what day it was. I just kept walking - scary, real-made it back to my trailer to finish the cheeseburger and investigate the little bird that keeps pecking at my rear window, the one covered with a forest green shade.

I lifted said shade to eyeball the critter: black head, brown eyes, seed-cracker beak, white breast, tan vest, black & white salted wings, white-tipped black tail. He comes and goes, flutters & taps for a minute or so, then retreats to the ground, the bushes, or disappears altogether. Is he (she) pecking at more than my window? If not, is she (he) some harbinger of things to come? Quoth the towhee, "Nevermore!"

Must be 9 or 10pm-

I've been lying down in this dark trailer, resting my eyes, listening to my Otis tape & remaining very undisturbed. Dr. Gene Scott on the trailer tube, all white hair and beard, purple shades, tuxedo & black rope around his neck.

Poor Walton Goggins must have been shot in the head five, six times yesterday & today. DP's gone - hell, he shoulda taken the old squib fart with him! The squibs never showed on camera, so the old Marine or whatever he was just kept building them bigger & bigger. I was afraid he was gonna blow off Walton's head just to save his job!

Gene Scott looks like one of the Munsters. Lots of Jesus people in the TV audience, clappy & yapping & lapping up Dr. Gene's gospel radiation. There's an 800 num-

ber on the bottom of the screen, the mute's on, Magic Sam sings, "I wanta boogie till the break of day." Jesus saves, Dr. Scott, but Magic Sam gets down!

5/22/2000 Monday

Big scene tonight, #98, in which Doris gets her oats? Nope, but Denise, Jerry & Mary get their final tortures before getting dropped into the pit. I'm fired up, ready to don my Halloween costume of Mr. Willis's skin: arms, chest and face, complete with a perfect head of silver hair.

I'm in at 2:30pm, an hour earlier than my original call time. Five minutes in my trailer, dropping off my bag, popping in another music cassette, pulling on my costume, and 2nd A.D. "Shew" is knocking on my door, ready to cart me up to Wayne in the makeup trailer.

Matt McGroarty's almost done - he's been here at least an hour & a half getting into his full "Tiny" makeup: burned head & hands, full prosthetics glued on him & painted by Wayne & Bart Nixon, with whom I first worked in 1986 on *Chawswow 2* in Austin, TX. When Tiny stands up in makeup & goofy Batman costume, he's got to lean considerably to angle his 7'6" frame out the door. Matt says his size 29 feet are the world's largest. What do they say about a man with big feet?

My makeup starts with Wayne trimming my beard & shaving my head stubble back down to the skin, the better to which to glue my albino Otis wig. Next comes the bone-white Pax, stippled on with a small triangular sponge. Wayne does my head, face, hands, belly and a few spots on my thighs where the skin shows through the holes in my raggedy jeans. Wayne darkens my eye sockets, paints my fingernails a plum purple, then glues on the wig and my mutton chop sideburns.

Last but not least, Wayne hands me a Kleenex to dry my teeth, then applies a reeking combination of black & gold tooth stain for that redneck, cannibal, seven-been-flossed look that I'm sure will endear Otis to dentists everywhere.

I'm shirtless today. Since I'll be wearing pieces of Mr. Willis, I get the albino treatment pretty much my entire upper body. Wayne shows me the Willis skin, decides to tie it on on the set. Christina [the lens tech] will wait, too, to put in my contacts. Fine with me.

Scene 98 is a killer and oh so fun! We shoot a master of me descending the stairs to my family's chant of "Who's your daddy?" I then approach our three remaining captives - who hang from an iron chandelier in the "living" room - and have a little fun with them. We spend hours on coverage, shooting different angles, lenses, over & over. Tobey, our script supervisor, estimates that the scene will take up a whopping six minutes of screen time, so Rob wants the editor to have several choices for every action.

I'm sticky with stage blood, got Mr. Willis' body parts tied with twine to my chest and arms. I stumble twice during my descents, curse, keep playing the scene while Rob yells, "Cut!" Finally, I figure out that counting the stairs will ensure a smooth decline; it does. Hell, I'm wear-

ing a heavy hooded robe pulled down over my face, a sticky latex mask & painted contact lenses, i.e. I'm blind as a bat.

We finish up at around 1:15a.m. God bless the three victims (Chris Hardwick, Erin Daniels & Jennifer Jostyn). Not only are they garbed in hot animal costumes-pig, donkey and rabbit- they've spent hours in harnesses suspended by chains from the living room chandelier. I guess wearing a sticky, disturbing skin suit ain't so bad after all. Hey, who's your daddy?!

4:46 a.m. 6/2/2000 Friday

Another long cold night at Valdez movie ranch in Santa Clarita. In at 6pm (after fighting an hour and a half of L.A. traffic up 101, 170, the 5 to Valencia), wardrobe & makeup almost immediately, up to the set for rehearsal with brother Rufus (Robert Mikes). Tonight we're finishing Scene 99, wherein we stuff Jerry & Denise into a jumbo coffin, lower them into the pit. I'm feeling a bit like Adam Ant in my long-tailed red pirate coat and knee-high boots- all I need is a hanky in my sleeve and the Burundi Beat. This is the 70's after all!

Chris Hardwick (Jerry), the other shave-head in the cast, is doing a videotaped interview for the EPK (electronic press kit). Apparently, they're having sound trouble with a rather loud mocking bird squawking from a nearby stand of trees. I pick up a rock & chuck it in the bird's general direction. As rock flies through the black blob of branches & leaves, we hear a startled cry & then silence. Uh oh, did I just launch the million-to-one stone's throw that squashed the little sucker? Now they're calling me B.K. (for bird killer)!

I love our producers, love Rob Z., who asked me tonight to sign his script. I wrote, "The boogie man is real, and you found him. Thanks for taking a chance on me."

After sitting for my EPK session at 2:30am, I elect to drive home rather than crash at the local Best Western courtesy of the production company. My eyes are a bit blurry from another bout with the contacts, but I ease on down the road at a comfortable 75mph.

I'm home now, washed, brushed, full of vitamins & fatigue, wishing I could have been as witty & wise for the video crew as I was tonight for Otis. Oh, well, Rob & [producer] Andy [Gould] own the interview, so I'm sure that they'll cobble together my best clips. Hell, even though I was cold & tired, I must have stumbled on a few decent sound bites!

More work tomorrow (tonight!), so I'd better put down the pen & get some beauty rest. Rob opined that maybe for the sequel we should all be piestas- kind of a *Cutthroat Island* with no Geena Davis, no Renny Harlin and lots more murder & mayhem. I'm all for that, matey!

1:35am 6/3/2000 Saturday-

In my trailer, listening to a tape of the Moseley Brothers Band, watching drab, dark moth walk across the wall mirror in front of this little writing desk. Call time tonight 9pm- that makes 4 hours and 37 minutes so far without a



lick of work. I think we're burning Mary tonight on a giant wooden cross in the graveyard. I've written an invocation that I'll read before Tiny torches Mary's dead body.

*Whiskey biscum
barley drucum
muskat eyes &
virgins thagus
Quakin' bacon
Father Satan
take this flamin' sacrifice*

*Burnin' hair &
burnin' eyes &
burnin' lips of hot delight
Quakin' bacon
Father Satan
take your bride to hell tonight*

*Halloween,
HALLOWEEN!
HALLOWEEN!!!*

Dinner was steak, peas & carrots, coleslaw, a twice-baked potato & two delicious choco chip cookies. Rob invited Sheri, Jennifer & me back to his trailer to watch a rough cut of the opening of the movie, and it was truly demented, colorful, the start of a movie I'd line up to see whether I was in it or not.

My teeth stain is wearing off; so, too, my purple fingernail polish. My eyes look glassy & tired, wig & mustonchops holding nicely, makeup rubbing off around my eyes. Shro said touchups in 20 minutes- that was at least an hour ago. Stay fresh, stay fresh, m'lady!

Rob's talking about a pirate movie again- I'd love to be a member of the Zombie Players, do a movie or two every year, get rich, live in a house and eat lots of cookies? Uh, Bill...oops, time to go!

Hit the set in time to watch Baby stabbing Mary again & again & again & again. Both girls covered in sticky syrup blood, hair matted, faces flecked with gore. Rob liked my skull-face makeup applied by Bart Mixon, tweaked by Wayne on the set. Rob also approved my sermonette, liked the idea of finishing it off with "Halloween" three times, each one progressively louder & more frightening!

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Tiny's working tonight, his reward for sitting through another 3-hour makeup application! I drain a bowl of chicken veggie soup, joke with the producers, head back to the trailer for some snoozing. Shro wakes me circa 5am, tells me that they won't be getting to me tonight. "Does that mean I'm a wrap?" I ask. Yep.

I stumble over from my roomette to the makeup trailer. Christina's taking off for a week to visit her mom in Santa Fe, N. Mex. I'm feeling abandoned by my lens tech- there's a certain intimacy that develops when someone's sticking things in your eyes, taking them out, giving you soothing drops all the while. Hasta la vista, baby.

Out of there at 5:20 (Shro don't like paying me overtime!), home by 6:30 for donuts, coffee, 30 minutes online to recheck my stocks, find out how the Lakers did vs Portland (they lost). Now I'm showered, cold-creamed, lying in bed writing these notes at 7:54am. I'm on hold Monday, may not work all next week. Whatever it takes, baby, I'm there with sleeves rolled and teeth painted black & brown.

Day off, groggy, sore, up at 11, never really got going until mid-afternoon. Hungry today, need to go shopping! Washed dishes, kitchen floor, fed pets, hosed all that Valuzet Ranch dust off the Choptmobile. Residual check for 12 bucks from old Showtime episode of "Fallen Angels." Hey, it's better than a poke in the eye with a burnt stick!

What would I want if I could have something from the set? Wardrobe? Sure, but nothing I'd kill for. Otis doesn't have any particular props- no coat hangers, etc. Hmmm, if I could have anything, it'd be Wolf, my little two-headed brother floating in his jar of brine!

6:30pm 6/8/2000 Thursday-

Call time on the set, still at Valuzet in Santa Clarita. I got out here early, stopped off at McDonald's for a couple's cheeseburgers & an order of fries to set me up, shoot me through tonight with a load of ornery hormones.

Rob's here, looking none the worse for wear. I told him that I nearly bought a bag of pecan sandies (my current favorite cookie)- they were on sale at Ralph's, even had 'em in my hand!- but I resisted temptation, put 'em back until after the shoot [Otis has to stay skinny!]. Rob laughed, appreciated my will power, promised that there'd be a status of Otis at the wrap party made of pecan sandies!

The big question is, did Rob have stomach flu Monday, or did he, as rumor has it, blow up at some Universal suits for trying to have things their way? I wouldn't be surprised if one thing led to another. Rob didn't get where he's gotten to today by playing whiffle boy with the squares.

Gym this afternoon- I like to break a sweat before I hit the set. I'm fed, rested, watered, exercised. Spirits of the theatre, I dedicate this night to you. Thank you for seeing me through this ordeal with ease, humor, generosity and enthusiasm. All hail the horror fan- it's time she gets what she deserves!

P.S. Actually, I'm dedicating tonight's performance to Bob Hope, 97 years young & just out of the hospital for bleeding intestines. Woof!

5:35am 6/9/2000 Friday-

Ah, man, I've earned my bed! Finished at 4, makeup off by 4:15, home by 5 for dry cereal (milk was sour), shower, cold cream, a squirt at today's paper (I can't see too well for several hours after wearing the lenses).

My throat's still a bit raw from shouting out the third "Halloween" during tonight's bonfire scene. Mercifully, we only did five takes- another one, and my pipes would have been blown for tomorrow's (today's) scene with Tiny & Denise in the bowels of the Ambassador Hotel in downtown LA.

Feels good to stretch out in bed after a hot shower. I'm not really tired, hence this journalizing. Birds are singing, cats whining on the balcony, I fed the goldfish, and now I've retreated to my bedroom, both doors shut, phone unplugged, prayers prayed & another good night under my belt.

Thank you, God, for getting me through & home in one piece. I'm having a ball & feeling good about what I'm bringing to the table here. Bottom line? Committed to giving the horror fan... we know, we know.

11am-

Woke up rough at 9:35, after about 2 1/2 hours sleep. My throat's a little ragged from last night's yelling, lower back aches from too-zealous gym workout two days ago, the skin around my eyes still sensitive from my attempts with a washrag & castile soap to rid myself of the raccoon black circles of greasepaint.

There's construction going on not far from my apartment- this phase includes pulverizing rocks with loud drill violence & pounding machines. They've stopped for now- thank God, maybe it's lunch break for the slab smashers & truck bangers.

For me, it's breakfast time- only thing is, I don't want to get out of bed, wish I could sleep longer, wish I had a warm, soapy pool to ease into, submerge in, a primordial stew with hot jets & fishes & sweet original waters to lave me, lap me, love me back into fighting trim for today's 5 o'clock call.

Alas, no such luck. If I want hot water, I'll have another shower. Fighting trim comes courtesy of a cuppa Check Full O' Nuts. No milk; I need to walk to the corner donut shop to buy a fresh pint.



7pm-

Laker game, just past the half. Reception's not so good here in the trailer in the parking lot of the spooky Ambassador Hotel. I'm all dressed up except for my eyes, waiting to be called to finish up the scene in Tiny's bedroom.

Laker game goes off- they're paying me to be Otis, not sports geek. I need to be figuring out why I'm down in the basement, lurking to catch Denise trying to escape. Rob says I'm spying, says I chide Tiny as if Denise were a puppy we all knew would eventually pee on the floor.

Back to my Johnny Winter CD. Looks like Lisa & Jane [my ex & our daughter] ain't showing up. That's two invites in two nights and no visitors. Boo-hoo and pass the mayhem!

9:30pm-

Lakers win! I'm gawking the post-game circus, eating a big red apple & some bite-size Nestles Crunches. By turning off the game in the 3rd quarter, I freed up the time to reread the script from cover to cover, just to get my head back into the movie. Especially fun going back

"We're all into the movie. We love Rob, trust him implicitly."

over the scenes we've already shot, comparing the written word to how we shot 'em. Scarecrow Attack, "Who's your daddy," the scene unfolding tonight between Tiny & Denise.

I'm back in the trailer, stuck inside Otis, flinching with every sound I hear outside my door. Are they coming for me? I'm so quiet that the throb of a/c machinery coming through the walls is mesmerizing me.

4am 6/10/2000 Saturday-

Washed, brushed, flossed, vitamins down the hatch, cats out on the balcony & all is well. Complimented tonight by stunt coordinator for consistently throwing Denise (Erin) on the same spot in the cage in Tiny's room. That's the craft part, I responded. Movie acting is a craft, and I love it.

We're all into the movie; the story, our characters. We (the cast) love Rob, trust him implicitly, can't wait to see the movie however, whenever it comes out. We know, too, that this will be a big hit, a real franchise!

4:45pm 6/13/2000 Tuesday-

Parked in the shade of Roller Derby Training Center on Foothill Blvd., location in sight, T-minus 15 minutes & counting down [to call time], one half hour here from my pad, up I70 to the 5 to the Ronald Reagan Freeway, off at Glendale to Arroyo to Foothill & this little piece of paradise.

Last day of work for me: [time for] Fish-boy and "take control." I'm nervous as usual, worried about lines even though I've read the script 40 times, done Fish-boy more than that! Why am I nervous? All in the head, mon-sieur!

I've rested, eaten well, broken a sweat, taken care of my saintly soul, returned calls, lost a few \$ in the stock market. Hell, I've even shipped product (four Cornbuds CDs off to Italy)! Pets R fed, kids with their moms; the wolf is not at the door today, so head, leave me be.

Throat's a little dry, but I've got gallons of water, Cepacol lozenges. It's dry out here, dusty dry in Sylmar, epicenter of a killer quake some years ago. Today it's a hot, groggy afternoon here on Foothill Blvd. Work awaits, and I'm a ding dong daddy. Spirits of the theatre, I'm yours! Amen.

I'm a work-finish as of 7:30am. Wonderful long night doing Fish-boy with Jennifer & Rainn [Wilson], then shifting gears at 4:30am for Chris, Dennis [Fimple] & Karen [Black] in "Munsters TV dinner" & "take control."

Shooting a lot of different looks for Fish-boy. At first, I thought that it was because Rob wasn't happy with what I was doing with the scene, but ultimately the things we shot were so radically different that I realized that he had something stylistic in mind.

Un-kissing Jennifer! Rob said we'll be contending for the MTV Movie Kiss award. More character discovery for me- Otis in love?

Dinner in same large room as roller derby ring- I had corn beef & spuds, hold the cabbage, and one oatmeal



miso cookie. Lots of coffee tonight, hot water, cold water, all five Cepacol lozenges to keep me up, keep my throat from going rasy.

Set crawling with suits tonight: all 3 producers, 2 execs from Universal, line producer, you name it, they were there. And by golly it was good to see them! This might be the first time [in my career] when I actually got along famously with all of my masters! Who'd'a thunk it? Am I getting older & wiser? Or is it just that I'm having a ball & appreciate the opportunity to strut my stuff? All four, methinks.

I'm a wrap, shake whatever hands are offered at 7am. Rob signs my script "Thanks for being great, you're a hoot. Get ready for more to come!" Do I hear *House of 2000 Corpses*?

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Just Say... **NONHOSONNO** Dario Argento's **SLEEPLESS**

by Greg Goodsell

No less an expert than Stephen King mercilessly trashed Dario Argento's *Suspense* (1977) at the time of its release. It would appear to be a matter of taste on King's part, as he would later champion *The Boogers* (1981) as an unsung horror masterpiece. The accolade of "cinematic masterpiece" takes years to achieve, and flap comments based on a single screening are usually lost in the sands of time.

That out of the way, Argento's latest *Nonhosonno* (*I Can't Sleep, Sleepless*) remains a major disappointment. A return to his giallo roots, the most shocking thing about the film is the lack of flourishes his fans and admirers have come to expect.

The Maestro demonstrates his respect for the fair sex by opening the film on a highly unattractive prostitute stumbling upon evidence that the notorious dwarf killer, who left a swath of dead bodies in Turin back in 1983, may not be resting in his grave and may still be at large. Jumping on a commuter train, she is bloodily dispatched along with her friend who comes to pick her up at the station. A retired detective who originally handled the case, Moretti (Max Von Sydow) makes an entreaty to the son of one of the killer's original victims, Giacomo (Stefano Dionisi) to assist in the investigation. Giacomo is reunited with his boyhood friend (Roberto Zibetti) in addition to sparking a new romance with a harp-playing lovely (Chiara Caselli). The bodies pile up, tell-tale clues are left—all leading to a blood-drenched surprise conclusion.

The unexceptional plot would seem to be tailor made to Argento's baroque sensibilities, but he doesn't seem



intent on taking the ball and running with it this time around. The first murder(s) are exciting, but not the show stopping set pieces we've come to expect from Dario. The Turin locations are attractive, but not the candy-colored nightmares of *Suspense* and *Inferno* (1980) or the chilly, futuristic vistas found in *Tenebre* (1982). A viewer versed in his style would picture a scene in a disco to be full of scantily clad Eurobabes in Art Deco costumes, with wild, expressionistic lights and pulsating music. The nightclub scene in *Nonhosonno* looks like something out of MTV's "Spring Break" series after the frat boys have run out of beer money and have given up prospects of getting laid. Gritty realism is something his fans don't expect.

Without the usual visual verve, *Nonhosonno*'s plotting irregularities (never Argento's strong point) become very apparent. The audience knows right away the murders can't be committed by a dwarf, as the unseen gloved hands always attack the leggy victims about the neck and face. Odd continuity errors abound. A speeding nighttime train trip suddenly cuts to wheels churning in broad daylight. The hero receives an important phone call during a driving rainstorm, only to speed away to his girlfriend's aid in stark sunlight. A drowning in the aforementioned nightclub in a



power blackout appears to take place in a room with electrical light.

Inexplicable slasher movie logic abounds: Victims-to-be find time to retrieve purses while being pursued by the mad killer, and a sleazy cab driver who witnessed the murderer slash the first two victims to shreds returns—alone—to the train station in the dead of night to collect a cash reward for returning the killer's gold fountain pen. Guess what happens?

"Nonhosonno is not Argento's worst film by any stretch of the imagination. The fact that a definitive DVD version of *Opera* (1987) is eliciting more fan interest on the Internet in lieu of this latest venture, however, says a lot."



The key to the murders comes from a children's book, a cheerful little ditty about a farmer who brutally murders the animals disturbing his sleep. The poem is composed by Argento's precocious bundle of talent, daughter Asia. The credibility is more than slightly strained, as even the least attentive parent would never give this book to a child—either, they would let them surf the Internet for celebrity autopsy photos instead.

The clincher is the film's only real "creative murder" scene. The camera pans along a length of carpet as we see shoes and a vacuum cleaner picking their way through a dance routine. The sequence ends on a pair of ballerina shoes hoisted off the carpet as an unseen killer snaps the dancer's neck off-screen. This sequence is not vintage Argento—it calls to mind the antics of no-budget video maker Len Cella's "Moron Movies" (i.e., "Jello Makes a Louie Doonestop").

Nonhosonno is not Argento's worst film by any stretch of the imagination. The fact that a definitive DVD version of *Opera* (1987) is eliciting more fan interest on the Internet in lieu of this latest venture, however, says a lot.



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DVD

Guillermo Del Toro: ADULT HORROR THROUGH THE EYES OF A CHILD

"Never grow up."

Forrest J Ackerman

by Shane M. Dallmann



If you haven't seen Victor Erice's *The Spirit Of The Beehive* (El Espíritu de la Colmena, 1973), please do so before it's too late. While it's not a "horror film" in its own right, it remains an indispensable demonstration of how and why many of the best of them work. Erice's film takes place in 1940, during the waning days of the Spanish Civil War. In brief, it details the effects that James Whale's *Frankenstein* (1931) has on two young girls when a print arrives in town for a special screening. Why did the Monster drown little Maria? How would he treat our protagonists if they were to meet? And how might their "relationship" with the Monster (as they see him) affect their perception of a wounded political fugitive? See for yourself—but never underestimate the power of the right monster at the right time. In real life, a similar screening of *Frankenstein Meets The Wolfman* helped inspire a lifelong devotion to fantastic cinema in a young Jacinto Molina, best known today as Paul Nachy—while today, some of the most visually and emotionally memorable genre films around arrive courtesy of a young writer/director who never forgot the monstrous "friends" he made as a child, either. His name is Guillermo del Toro.

Del Toro, born Oct. 9th, 1964 in Guadalajara, Mexico, no doubt shared one key element of his childhood with most readers of this magazine, whatever their religious, economic or socio-political differences: the filmmaker-to-be was transfixed by such television programs as *The Outer Limits* (what was the first thing that popped into your head when I mentioned that title—it wasn't a regular human character, was it?) and the classic output of Universal and Hammer. Well-versed in the language shared by fans around the world, del Toro gained his first professional experience by directing three episodes of Mexico's 1986 TV series "Hora Marcada" before serving as a special makeup artist on various feature films from 1987 to 1993. While none of these efforts received American exposure (save for their Spanish-language tape releases for ethnic video stores), his eventual feature debut caught quite a few eyes and became an art-house favorite in the U.S.

1993's *Cronos*, written and directed by del Toro at the age of 29, could be quickly described as a cross between *Dracula* and *Hellraiser*—without doing the actual films any real justice. An aging antiques dealer with the rather provocative name of "Jesus Gris" (Federico Luppi) discovers a unique treasure: but the "Cronos Device" is much more than a rare piece of art. The intricately constructed bracelet houses a living, centuries-old insect capable of granting the gift of youthful vigor to those who activate the device and allow it to pierce their flesh (which Gris does quite by accident). The gift, naturally, comes with a price—the user must replenish his energy with fresh human blood on a regular basis. Complicating the issue is the presence of the wealthy but elderly Dieter de la Guardia (Claudio Brook), who also knows of (and covets) the device—and the brutish Angel (Ron Perlman), who means to get it for him. Yet while the rivalry between Gris and de la Guardia provides the bulk of the action, the emotional core of the film lies in the relationship of Gris with his grand-



daughter Aurora (Tamara Shanath). Aurora, representing the true youth that Gris can never realistically regain, must recognize her grandfather and the "monster" simultaneously. And even after bearing witness to one of his "feedings," she can never hate the kind old man she knows is still there... but perhaps she can provide him with the only help left to him.

The sensitive performances and striking visuals of *Cronos* (do yourself a favor and only rent the subtitled version) garnered del Toro some modest critical acclaim in America—but Hollywood didn't beat an immediate path to his door. The director wouldn't helm his first English-language feature until 1997. *Mimic* had all the makings of a "prestige" film, not the least of which was a cast featuring Oscar winners Mira Sorvino and F. Murray Abraham, but failed to catch box-office fire for several reasons—some of which were legitimate flaws, but one of which most assuredly wasn't. The story (which del Toro didn't write) may have been about mutant insects stalking a subway—but children once more occupy the heart of the drama, and one can easily see what drew the director to the material. Dr. Susan Tyler (Sorvino), frustrated with her continued inability to bear a child of her own, devotes her efforts to the eradication of a cruel illness claiming many other young lives. Long story short: her work, while successful, results in a mutant strain of cockroaches that can "mimic" human appearance and behavior. In the scene that upset most audience members (and most likely contributed to the film's demise), children are once again targeted—in this case, two

young "bug collectors" (who sell their unusual findings to Dr. Tyler) choose the wrong lair to invade and are quickly, brutally dispatched (while this is scarcely the sadistic child-butchery of *The Unfold Story*, et al, it's still touchy material for mainstream America). But one "special" child (for us, the word would be "autistic") exists here, as well—and one of the film's best scenes takes place when he joins the company of the monsters; moving amongst them unharmed and "communicating" with them through the rhythmic clacking of a pair of spoons. (As most of us already know, the film's true highpoint is the breathtakingly-staged abduction of Tyler by one of the subway creatures.) The question arises, therefore: since the monsters don't automatically destroy every human they find, could a co-existence be achieved by an attempt at understanding? But we know how well this idea usually goes over in monster cinema, and *Mimic* is no exception. Sadly, its dependence on conventions prevents its unique qualities from prevailing—by the time we reach the climax (which even involves a self-sacrificing black hero, played by Charles S. Dutton) we have to concede that the territory is all too familiar. Nevertheless, the cast and the visuals demand that *MIMIC* be given at least one view. (For the record, del Toro had nothing to do with the direct-to-video sequel.)

Del Toro's first box-office sensation was still two films away, but his next (and possibly most personal) film may well be his best to date. *The Devil's Backbone* (*El Espinazo del Diablo*, 2001) came to us as a subtitled "art house" release, as did *Cronos*; while its setting (Spain of



1939) places it in the near-immediate company of the aforementioned *Spirit Of The Beehive*. But the youthful protagonist in this outing (written by del Toro with Antonio Trashorras and David Muñoz) is a boy named Carlos (Fernando Tielve), and the "monsters" he encounters have nothing to do with the movies. For his own protection during wartime, Carlos is reluctantly left at an orphanage/school by his father. The crumbling, financially-troubled institution, headed by the elderly Dr. Casares (Federico Luppi of *Cronos*) plays host to many disturbing elements, each of which Carlos must face. An unexploded bomb dominates the schoolyard in which it has become embedded, and the students that dare to approach it claim that it's still ticking. The expected struggle for acceptance amongst his new peers puts Carlos in the path of caretaker Jacinto

(Eduardo Noriega, co-star of Alejandro Amenábar's *Abre Los Ojos/Open Your Eyes*, recently remade with Tom Cruise as *Vanilla Sky*), whose romantic good looks can scarcely disguise the amazing cruelty he's capable of. And most disturbingly, the ghost of a young student named Santi (Junio Valverde), supposedly killed in the air raid that brought the ever-visible bomb with it, seems desperate to reach Carlos. The film derives its title from the deformed spine of a laboratory fetus kept by Dr. Casares—said fetus is preserved in rum, rather than formaldehyde. And when Carlos approaches the doctor with his stories of Santi's ghost, he's offered a sip of this special elixir as a cure for his "delusions." Unsurprisingly, Carlos declines the opportunity—but once he leaves the room, the doctor himself indulges: what has he seen? The real "monsters" in the film are, of course, human—and the supernatural has nothing to do with a devastating sequence that leaves the schoolyard littered with the bodies of children, or the equally disturbing flashback that reveals the truth behind the demise of Santi. So it comes as little surprise when certain critics try to remove *The Devil's Backbone* from the genre ("it's not a horror film, etc. etc."). But make no mistake—the ghost is real. Santi is not the psychic by-product of a war-fueled imagination, but a legitimate spectre with a mission—and he'll have company by the end of the story. Del Toro's trained eye gives us another indelible creation in Santi, who distinguishes himself from other movie ghosts by appearing perpetually underwater—even as he walks the dry corridors, blood floating freely away from the hole in his cracked skull rather than running down his face. The troubling subject matter, combined with a foreign language (*Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* notwithstanding), caused del Toro's best-reviewed film to become his least-seen effort in America.

But next up was the hugely popular *Blade II* (2002), the plot and characters of which scarcely demand recounting here. Del Toro had, at last, achieved unqualified Hollywood success—this, however, naturally prompted a question. What happens when a man who crafted such memorable small-scale thrillers as *Cronos* and *The Devil's Backbone* gets to cut loose with a multi-million dollar-budgeted, action-packed vehicle for a "name" star such as Wesley Snipes? Will his work still be recognizable? Or

"The troubling subject matter, combined with a foreign language, caused del Toro's best-reviewed film to become his least-seen effort in America."

will he disappear into a homogenized "machine?" Despite the vampire theme, there's precious little that *Cronos* and *Blade II* (which, as with *Mimic*, was not written by del Toro) share on the surface—most notably, *Blade II* has no children to speak of. Ah, but wait—what about all the unborn, incubating Reapers that the ancient vampire patriarch (who already has the power to live forever) is trying to spring on the world? No, that's a dead end—nobody can relate to these potential horrors, while the "father" himself has none of the latent compassion that distinguished Jesus Gris to his own family. We keep seeing the animated Powerpuff Girls on the techno-geek's video monitor, but that's more of a character quirk than a significant theme. And yet someone does exist who can relate to "monsters" as in del Toro's previous films... the viewer. The viewer who can see *Blade* through the eyes of the child who first discovered the character when he picked up a comic book. *Blade* is part vampire himself, yet we have no trouble accepting him as the hero of the film. We want him to save his friend and "father figure" Whistler (Kris Kristofferson) from the "bad" vampires, and we want him to destroy the Reapers because—admit it—we like to picture ourselves as part of the action. And "action" we get—del Toro handles spectacle as skillfully as he does subtlety. Lightning-paced fight scenes, graphic monster mayhem ("eyes of a child" or no, *Blade II* contains as much gore as an R rating can handle) and truly innovative, startling vampire effects are in abundance, while Snipes, Kristofferson and Ron Perlman (as Reinhardt, an extremely reluctant—and vicious—"ally" to *Blade*) all contribute thoroughly engaging performances. *Blade II* defies the odds as not only a sequel that surpasses the original (though Stephen Norrington's *Blade* was received quite appreciatively, as well), but as a big-budget "studio" film that retains the personality—and vision—of a director previously accustomed to playing to much smaller (and quieter) audiences.

Turning down the chance to direct *Blade III*, del Toro has nevertheless chosen to remain for now in the world of comic books with an adaptation of Mike Mignola's *Hellboy*, to feature Ron Perlman in the title role. The comic book origin, the presence of Perlman and the end-of-war setting (in this case, WWII) are all elements found (and successfully used) in the director's previous works, and horror fans might anticipate this project with optimism instead of today's usual cynicism... as long as they don't grow up in the meantime.



Del Toro

on

Ghosts, Purity, Immortality and Jodorowsky's *El Topo*

"Existentially you cannot hedge your bets: You either are or are not. You shouldn't live your life cautiously."

Have you seen the film *Spirit Of The Beehive*—and if so, do you feel it had any direct influence on your work?

It reminds me of my favorite films and its effects can be felt all through every movie I make. To me it's one of the best films ever made. I modeled the girl in *Cronos* as an homage to *Spirit* and *Don't Look Now*.

The old man turns to the supernatural to retain his life in *Cronos*, while the little girl recognizes the kind man behind the "monster" throughout. Can she retain her innocence?

At the end of both *Devil's Backbone* and *Cronos*, it is my belief that the child characters have changed. They are no longer the same pure creatures that started their journey, now they've been tainted by pain and the real world and they're in the process of becoming adults—or at least they've become non-children. Nevertheless in the case of *Cronos*, the girl remains pure all through the resurrection and ordeal of her undead grandfather. This is why, of all the characters, she is the only immortal character in that movie.

Children are mercilessly wiped out in *Mimic*—some by the disease, some by the creatures whose lair they invade. The exception is the boy who seems to relate to them better than to his fellow humans. If other humans had made more of an effort to "relate," might harmony have existed between the species?

My feeling is that in *Cronos*, *Mimic* and *Devil's Backbone* I like to present a character of two that have such a pure view of the world, that are in such a "state of grace" that they can see "the otherness" of the creatures, ghosts, etc and not lose their curiosity or their capacity to relate to them. I think that the key to harmony is the rare quality of being able to relate, to be empathic to the other side. That's why so many human conflicts remain for such stupidly long periods of time: we cannot see the other's point of view.

While there are genuine ghosts in *The Devil's Backbone*, the real "monsters" are all too human. And yet the oldest and most skeptical human in the film becomes a pivotal ghost himself. Is a "ghost," to you, a symbol of all-powerful human will?

A "ghost" is an open oyster, readable in the film as so many different things... A ghost can be just that: an out-of-place presence trying to forewarn or to obtain revenge. A question in search of answers. Or it can be something that haunts us: unfinished business. A war that never ends, a love that we never declared, etc... I once read a poem, I might misquote it, with a wonderful passage that read: "Of all seed words of tongue and pen, the saddest are these: it might have been."

That is a ghost. In the movie, the character of Cesare (Federico Luppi) is the "thinking man" and I always feel that intellectuals are untrustworthy if they don't marry theory with action. The character is just that: an impatient lover, an cowardly poet of the revolution, a saint lover—he always leaves things half-done, therefore he deserves to be a ghost. All other stories in the film either go on or conclude fully. Cesare is also the kind of intellectual that declares the virtues of logic and asceticism, while taking a good swig of superstition (literally) "just in case". Existentially you cannot hedge your bets: you either are or are not. You shouldn't live your life cautiously.

His children in *Blade* if except for the unborn monsters that the ancient vampire (who already has eternal life) tries to unleash on the world. But might the "child" have been the viewer—specifically those who would have been the original "audience" of the comic book?

Not at all. There are two stories of Fathers and sons in *Blade*: *Blade*-Whistler and, the one I find more attractive, the relationship of the Vampires Royals: Nyssa-Damaskinos-Nomak. Every time I see the movie, I enjoy the Nomak-Damaskinos final dialogue enormously. Is a fantasy version of a father-son confrontation that every man goes through at least once in life. I get a lump in my throat every time I see that scene. I obviously have some heavy unfinished business with my Father.

Have you considered using Ron Perlman as a good guy—I'm thinking specifically of his child-like, innocent look in *City Of Lost Children*?

I thought his character in both *Cronos* and *Blade* if are very simpatico. At any rate we are collaborating on *Hellboy*, where he plays the hero. I think Ron is one of the most captivating actors ever. A true larger-than-life character, both on and off screen.

Loaded question: do you feel that there's anything about your work to date that viewers should know, but that they haven't caught on to yet. In your opinion?

A lot. But I'm at peace, you see? Because there's also a lot that I don't discover until I view my movie years later. All fables, by nature, are loaded with symbols and layers that don't become apparent until time has passed and you revisit them. The best example is Jodorowsky. His films mutate as you grow up. Go out right now and re-view *El Topo* and you'll discover something new about yourself.

INTERVIEW by SHANE M. DALLMANN

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The behind-the-scenes scoop here is that *Dog Soldiers* is the latest and best horror pick-up from D.E.J. Productions, a subsidiary of none other than the Blockbuster Video chain. Yes, the folks who banned *The Last Temptation of Christ*, censored already 'R'-rated flicks like Ken Russell's *Whore* (Blockbuster's version wasn't just cut—it even blocked out the film's title), and promoted their 'family friendly' stores are now huckstering their own horror films (among other genres). They most recently wedged their way into subsidizing a series of true-life serial killer titles launched by Indy label First Look with Chuck Parelli and Steve Railsback's *Ed Gein* (2003).

Outbid in the home stretch by D.E.J./Blockbuster's deeper corporate pockets, First Look found itself eased into a partnership of sorts with D.E.J. to continue its planned serial killer biopics (*Werewolves*, gay vampires, necrophilia, cannibalism, rape, torture, and brain-drilling to create sex slaves seems contrary to Blockbuster's squeaky-clean public image, but times change—there's new management upstairs, and there's too much money to be made in the genre. What Blockbuster once kept to its own venues for years as in-store exclusives are now peddled to all video outlets under a variety of established companies, meaning the independent video stores Block works so hard to put out of business are now paying their most aggressive corporate competitor for B-titles issued under a variety of umbrella company monikers (i.e., *Two Left Shoes*, *City Heat*, *Square Dog*, etc.)—and Blockbuster further undercut them by hustling *Dog Soldiers* to Sci-Fi Network for broadcast before its video release!

Along with a procession of homoerotic teen-scare drak helmed by David DeCoteau (a trio of *Brotherhood* teen vampire films, *Final Scab*, *The Nightingale*, and the upcoming *Wolves of Wall Street* and thin gruel from such 'auteurs' like Del Tenney (*Horror of Party Beach* infamy, co-scripting and acting in *Do You Wanna Know A Secret*), D.E.J. has released worthier fare like Jeremy Katzen's *The Arctic Expeditions* (2001) and now *Dog Soldiers*.

But Gein scored big in the direct-to-vld market, and that's where Blockbuster is placing their bets. To date, David Jacobson's sluggish *Dahmer* and Mar-thee Bright's balis-to-the-wall *Ted Bundy* (both 2002) continue the lineage. *Dahmer* is an aimless, morose, gutless, introspective downer, but Bright—who scripted gems like *Gun Crazy*, *Dark Angel*, and *Modern Vampires*, and wrote and directed *Freeway* and *Freeway 2*—pulls no punches in his bracing portrait

RED ALERT!

"Bring me the whiskey and the super glue!"

Surgical logic in *Dog Soldiers*

TED BUNDY

of serial rapist and murderer Bundy (played by Michael Reilly Burke). The escalating savagery of Bundy's misogynistic rampage is depicted with frightening clarity, culminating in a sucker-punch final act, leave it to Bright to dramatize the one sordid detail of death-row prep for electrocution (sneaking with cotton balls). Hollywood has skirted for decades. The series will continue, but if you find it odd that Blockbuster is in bed with the likes of Gein, *Dahmer*, and Bundy, consider the most disturbing credit line in *Dahmer*'s closing crawl: 'Costumes provided by The Walt Disney Studios Costume Department.' —Stephen R. Bissette



SHAMELESS PLUG DEPT. Squirt (W-Animator) Gordon and Dave (The Dead Hate the Living) have optioned your REBditor's 1995 novella, *Director's Cut*, as a future film project. And why the fuck not? It kicks ass! Get your limited, signed and numbered copy (includes bitchin' collectible bookplate) by sending \$10 (postage paid) to: Chas Bakun * P.O. Box 10155 * Westminster, CA 92685-0155

Blue Underground, Inc. (U.K.) and Jim Van Bebber are preparing a 16mm festival print of *Charlie's Family* for release in the Fall/Winter 2002. This 93m version contains footage never before seen in any previous print. Screenings at Sundance and the Berlin Film Festival are planned.

Rob Zombie's *House of 1000 Corpses* has been picked up by Lions Gate Films for release in early 2003. Pumped by both Universal and MGM for its violence and gore, the film has found an outspoken advocate in Tom Drtzenberg, president of Lions Gate Releasing, who says, "We're really looking forward to having a lot of fun with this campaign."

Dave Parker and Mike (The Convent) Mendez have a shit-kickin' smokin' Showtime special, *Masters of Horror*, coming to cable this Halloween. Sci-Fi Channel showings and a collectible DVD (w/ tons o' extras) are also planned. The documentary includes chats with Darío Argento, George Romero, Tobe Hooper, Wes Craven, Stuart Gordon, John Carpenter, Rick Baker and... your REBditor.

The less said about the proposed Michael (Pearl Harbor) Bay remake of the venerable Texas Chainsaw Massacre the better.

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RED LETTER MOMENTS

in

Splatter History

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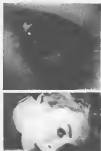


PSYCHO

Alfred Hitchcock
1960

fx Jack Barron, Robert Dawn
Meticulously designed to accommodate up to 78 camera set-ups, the breathtaking shower sequence still retains its shocking potency and reveals the hand of a true master at work. Lasting 45 seconds, the crisply edited, inventively photographed murder of star Janet Leigh effectively tricked the audience into believing they'd seen far more than what was actually on the screen. Hardly a real Red Letter day though—they used chocolate syrup from a squeeze bottle to simulate one of our most precious bodily fluids.

1



THE EXORCIST

William Friedkin

1973

fx Dick Smith

Perhaps The Greatest Horror Film Ever Made, this shocker first introduced incestual cannibalism and masturbation by crucifix to a still shocked audience even the projectile vomiting seems awfully tame after these two taboo trashers

2**DAWN OF THE DEAD**

George Romero

1979

fx Tom Savini

Full frontal cranial déformation by a SWAT team shotgun during the action-packed opening sequence knocked down the doors of splatter and unleashed the coming decade's Red Tide. The spashy dismemberment by zombies at the climax provides a tasty bookend

3**NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD**

George Romero

1968

fx K. Hardman, M. Eastman, V. Survinski

The cannibalism, graphic violence and nudity were quite shocking for their time, but the trowel stabbing of the mother by her zombieified ill' brat remains brutally chilling

4**RE-ANIMATOR**

Stuart Gordon

1985

fx John Buechler, Tony Doublin

The over-amped, re-animated exploding torso whose thrashing intestines strangle poor ol' Herbert climaxes one of the most deliriously twisted land way fun tales of the century

5**ALIEN**

Ridley Scott

1979

fx Carlo Rambaldi

The mutant baby hellspawn's shocking ribcage boogie was reportedly a complete surprise to the cast who weren't told exactly what was about to happen. The adult manifestation went on to become the Most Frequently Cited Creature of the Decade

6**THE OMEN**

Richard Donner

1976

fx John Richardson

The director of the Lethal Weapon flicks delivers a very dry, but dandy, kickass decapitation by sheet glass that dramatically raised the stakes on the Creative Kill

7**BLOOD FEAST**

Herschell Gordon Lewis

1963

fx H.G. Lewis, Allison Downie

He didn't do it well, but he did do it first. The Splatter Film was born and tongues, brains, hearts and limbs were the first to go

8**ZOMBIE**

Lucio Fulci

1979

fx Gianetto de Rossi

The Maestro of Maggot Mayhem delivers the 14" Splinter-in-the-Eyeball scene that remains one of the most original, shocking and brutally exhilarating moments in Splatter history. Parallels to the climactic 'Stargate' sequence in Stanley Kubrick's 2001. A Space Odyssey are unmistakable

9**SCANNERS**

David Cronenberg

1981

fx Dick Smith, Gary Zeller, Henry Pierng

The super chunky cranial apocalypse (achieved with a hidden shotgun) during an intensive scan-off session still packs one helluva wallop

10**CANNIBAL HOLOCAUST**

Ruggiero Deodato

1979

fx M. Giustini, N. Caballini, R. Ruzza

Well, the fuckin' nine-foot stake-up-the-ass! What were you thinking?

11**SUSPIRIA**

Dario Argento

1976

fx Germano Natali

The opening double murder sequence is as brutal (and colorful) as anything the Maestro has ever done. The knife thrusts to a punctured, pumping, exposed heart are bone-chilling

12**DEAD ALIVE**

Peter Jackson

1993

fx Bob McCarron, Marjory Hamlin

Arguably the Wettest Film Ever Made, this gleeful gorefest and-a-half features the justifiably famous Toro Power Mower Massacre and enough sauce to fill a stadium. This Is The One

13**THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE**

Tobe Hooper

1974

fx D. Pearl, Lyn Lockwood, W.E. Barnes
Another of just a handful of scenes that pulled the seat out from under me: the kid getting bonked by Leatherface and then pulled, twitching and thrashing, onto the Killing Floor

14

FRIDAY THE 13th
Sean Cunningham
1980

15

fx 7om Savin/
The nicely orchestrated sequence when the girl's face is split by an axe quickly established the nascent hand tool homicide subgenre that persists to this very day.

THE THING
John Carpenter
1982

16

fx Rob Bottin, Albert Whitlock
The thrashing, tentacle transformation of the alien-infected sled dog led a parade of totally twisted, slimy sanguinary delights seldom seen since. The autopsy sequence is a real keeper too.

MARK OF THE DEVIL
Michael Armstrong
1969

17

fx Adrian Hoven
Introducing graphic tongue yankings, sadistic tortures and instantly collectible barf bags, this sick flick was "guaranteed to upset your stomach" and earned a self-imposed "V for Violence" rating.

THE HOWLING
Joe Dante
1981

18

fx Rob Bottin
Marvelously punctuated by Pino Dinaggio's soaring score, the transformation sequence here is one of Modern Horror's finest (and way cool) Moments. Scary-ass werewolf too.

BAD TASTE
Peter Jackson
1989

19

fx Peter Jackson, Cameron Chitlock
Director Jackson as Derek chainsawing his way through an alien's head and out his poop chute restores your faith in the Ultimate Order of Things. Squatting amidst a sea of splatter, Derek crows, "I'm born again!" Indeed.

STREET TRASH
Jim Muro
1987

20

fx Jennifer Aspinwall
The finest, chunkiest exploding 400 lb body gag coupled with a sublime decapitation by airborne acetylene tank reinforce the film's honest-to-a-fault tagline: "Just when you thought you'd seen it all." Amen, bro.

VIOBODROME
David Cronenberg
1983

21

fx Rick Baker
Television with real guts! And, James



Woods' voracious, tape-eating tummy pussy simply screams. "Long live the New Flesh!"

THE FURY
Brian De Palma
1978

22

fx Rick Baker, A.D. Flowers
Amy Irving sends John Cassavetes straight to hell via a spectacular, multi-angled, slo-mo, full body detonation that'll almost make you wet yourself.

NEKROMANTIK
Jörg Buttgereit
1987

23

fx J. Buttgereit
The climactic cum 'n' blood geyser erupting from some suicidal wanker's pecker set new standards for The Hate Generation. Don't you be fuckin' dead things now, y' hear?

STORY OF RICKY
Ngai Kai Lim
1991

24

fx Philip Kwok, Chan Gok
The one-eyed, fat pig warden being reduced slowly to chunky tomato puree is only one of many demented delights in this deliciously inspired slaughterthon. This fucker really rocks.

BLACK SUNDAY
Mario Bava
1960

25

fx Mario Bava
Scream queen: It's the real deal here! Barbara Steele has a spike encrusted demon mask pounded onto her face during her execution for adultery and witchcraft. Bava's finest hour.

BLOODSUCKING FREAKS
Joel M. Reed
1976

26

fx Bob O'Brien
Perhaps the first (and only) time a woman's head is drilled into and her brains sucked out by soda straw. Enthusiastically embraced by Women Against Pornography.



THE GATES OF HELL
Lucio Fulci
1980

27

fx Gino de Rossa
Tough call: The lobotomy by dnlpres or intestinal evacuation by Michele Soavi's barfhound girlfriend? Either way, Fulci delivers the grosseries.

**ANDY WARHOL'S
FRANKENSTEIN**

Paul Morrissey &
Antonio Margheri
1973

fx Carlo Rambaldi, Roberto Arcangel
Originally released in 3-D, audiences
were treated to the sight of a freshly
impaled Udo Kier with his guts dangling
out about 20 ft beyond the screen
during an impassioned soliloquy. "You
can't say that you know life until you've
fucked death in the gall bladder!" Of
course.

BAY OF BLOOD

Mario Bava
1971

fx Mario Bava
The graphic axe in the face and the
skewering of two lovers by spear
helped establish the *Friday the 13th*-
style, creative kill subgenre nearly a
decade before we first met Jason and
his mom.

DAY OF THE DEAD

George Romero
1985

fx Tom Savini
While being torn in half by ravenous
zombies, Joe Peltro still manages to get
off one last sanguinary salute. "Choke
on it!" The zombie with no face, just
brains hanging out, gets honorable
mention.

THE EVIL DEAD

Sam Raimi
1983

fx Tom Sullivan, Bart Pierce
The decapitation by spade and various
axe attacks are mere appetizers to the
spectacularly grungy, chunky parade of
putrefaction as one demon undergoes a
dimactic mush meltdown. Using
primitive stop-motion photography, the
dramatic effect reportedly took three
and-a-half months to film.

SLADE

1998
Stephen Norrington

fx Greg Cannom, Gary Archer
A literal shower of gore drenching a
vampire disco opens this extremely
violent, bloody sci-fi/fantasy/kung fu/
comic book hybrid that puts the bite
back into vampires. Big time.

SLADE II

2002
Guillermo del Toro
fx Steve Johnson, Lance Gilmer
The CGI effects are spectacular, but the
creepy new bloodsuckers with the spit-
mouth bite are irresistible. The autopsy
scene may actually make you squirm a
bit.

28

CARRIE

Brian De Palma
1976

fx Gregory M. Aver
A shower of pig's blood on a prom
night telekinetic sets off a schoolyard
slaughterfest that climaxes with one of
those shock endings that was
continually ripped-off and recycled for
the next two decades.

**A NIGHTMARE ON
ELM STREET**

Wes Craven
1985

fx John Miller, Jim Dove
Johnny Depp and 375 gallons of sauce
on the Red O' Blood! Whoo-Heeee!

HELLRAISER

Clive Barker
1987

fx Bob Keen
The birth of that aborted skinned thing
that emerges from a heap of blood,
flesh and shit once again illustrates the
perils of porking dead things. And Jesus
wept. Yessir.

TENEBRAE

Dario Argento
1982

fx Giovanni Corridori
The fuckin' axe-whacked arm stump
spraying a primer coat on the kitchen
walls, mani! Paint it Red, baby!

**EVIL DEAD 2:
DEAD BY DAWN**

Sam Raimi
1987

fx KWB, Mark Shostrom, Tom Sullivan
More is definitely er... more, here, but
Ash's selfless act of auto-
disemberment is really a Kodak
Moment. Who's laughing now? Huh?

**THE LAST HOUSE
ON THE LEFT**

Wes Craven
1972

fx Troy Roberts
The Rain's ugly disembowelment or the
teeth-rattling dental nightmare that
brings a huge chase and a creep's front
teeth to the main stage.



鮮血の美学
鮮血の美学

34

35

36

37

38

39

**INTRUDER**

Scott Spiegel
1988

fx KWB

The really messy facial bissection by
band saw is a real gorehound's wet
dream. Too bad nobody saw it in the
widely released "R" version.

SHOGUN ASSASSIN

Kenji Misumi
1981

fx Akira Kaji
Majestic arterial geysers from freshly
dead, headless swordsmen abound.
You'll have to pick this time.

CANNIBAL FEROX

Umberto Lenzi
1981

fx Gino de Rosa
The dick-whacking, amputation and
subsequent scarfing of John Morghen's
manhood by a cannibal connoisseur is
just too rich to leave off this menu.

CANNIBAL APOCALYPSE

Antonio Margheri
1980

fx Gianetto de Rossi, Don Shelley
Once again Morghen gets maliciously
mangled when a bowling ball-sized hole
gets blown through his chest by a
shotgun-toting SWAT linker. Primo
Pastaspast.

THE BEYOND

Lucio Fulci
1981

fx Gianetto de Rossi, Germano Nacai
Again a tie: The acid drenched corpse in
the act of becoming a sea of red foam,
or the pig-tailed zombie redecorating
the room with her brains. Tough call.

FINAL DESTINATION

James Wong
2000

fx Flesh & Fantasy, Inc.
The shocking scene immediately
following the girl's "fuck death!"
proclamation dropped me outta my
seat. No fuckin' kidding.

40

41

42

43

44

45



DOCTOR BUTCHER, M.D.
Marino Girolami

46

1980

fx Maurizio Trani, Rosario Restopino
When a buzzing outboard motor is used to apply a devastating facial puree to an attack zombie, you know you're in the presence of greatness. You can just feel it.

FORBIDDEN WORLD
Allen Holzman

47

1982

fx R.C. Biggs, John Buechler
A doctor's tumor-ridden liver is cut out (without anesthesia), "natch" during an impromptu surgery aboard a spacecraft and fed to a gigantic, rampaging intergalactic bug. The resulting metastasizing barf bag apocalypse is a welcome addition to any universe.

**ANTHRÖPOPHAGUS:
THE BEAST**

48

Joe D'Amato
1980

fx J. D'Amato, G. Eastman
The fetus scarfing scene will float some boats but our favorite is the auto-cannibalistic climax where the Grim Reaper himself gnoshes down on his own intestines. Bravo, led!

**NIGHTMARES IN A
DAMAGED BRAIN**

49

Romano Scavolini
1981

fx Les Carrain, Ed French
The severed head resting in a puddle of squishy red slop at the foot of the bed during a particularly alarming nightmare sequence sets the twisted tone of this chunkblower. The axe murders ain't bad either.



MANIAC
William Lustig

50

fx Tom Savini
Genre workhorse Savini completely loses his head during a vicious shotgun attack that just squeaks by the brutal scalplings to earn its Red Letter.



THE CUTTING ROOM FLOOR

THE RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD

The Lost and Found Story of the Missing 20 Minutes

—by William Wilson



After several years of kick start attempts and a downright bizarre genesis, *Return of the Living Dead* finally hit the silver screens in the summer of 1985. Surrounded by such stellar zombie competition as Stuart Gordon's *Re-Animator* and George Romero's own *Day of the Dead*, *Return* set itself apart from the others with its tar black script by writer/director Dan O'Bannon that gleefully busted audiences' guts, only to gnaw on them seconds later.

Few fans, however, knew that the film existed in an earlier, extended cut that ran almost 20 minutes longer. The film was originally scheduled for release in late October of 1984 but it was a date that the film failed ultimately failed to meet. The film was then rescheduled for a spring of 1985 release and again bumped to the fall (later to become August). The intervening time was used to fine-tune, refine and edit the film. A workprint of the earlier, longer version surfaced on video allowing fans to see the differences. Amidst the blood-soaked hysterics of the film are tons of extra dialogue scenes and even a different ending that reinforces the "true story" title card that opens the film.

The film opens with some extra chunks of dialogue as Frank (James Karen) shows Freddy (Thom Matthews) around the Unedda Medical Supply warehouse. After showing off the split dogs, Frank warns Freddy about the oxygen canisters that are "highly explosive." Frank states that he doesn't want Freddy smoking in here, to which Freddy quickly replies, "Oh, don't worry. I don't smoke...cigarettes." This fast reply causes Frank to chuckle.

After viewing the cadaver in the frozen storage area, a rather lengthy dialogue scene transpires between Frank and Freddy.



**THEY'RE BACK FROM
THE GRAVE AND
READY TO
PARTY!**

Freddy: "Frank, how late we gonna work till tonight? I don't mean to rush you or anything. I just have a date later on."

Frank: "Hey, you're not a clock watcher, are you Freddy?"

Freddy: "No, I don't even have a watch."

Frank: "Oh well, what time's your date?"

Freddy: "Ten O'clock."

Frank: "Oh no, we're fine. We're only gonna work an hour or so. What you got a date with?"

Freddy: "A girl."

Frank: "Well I hope it's a girl. You know, I was kind of nervous with that damn carring you got there. You got some change for the soda machine?"

Freddy: "No."

Frank: "I guess I'll have to treat then. (laughs) Where you going?"

Freddy: "We're gonna go dancing tonight over at the Red Dog saloon."

Frank: "Ah, youth, youth, youth!"

The film then introduces the punk characters, with extra dialogue here as well. After resolving that they will go and pick Freddy up, Scuz (with the mowhawk) points

out that they have no car. Freddy's girlfriend Tina states that she was going to take the bus, to which Scuz replies, "Oh shit, I ain't taking no fucking bus!" Trash then suggests that they head over to Suicide's place and get him to drive them. Tina reiterates how she and Freddy would like to be alone, but that idea is shot down as the group decides to go to Suicide's.

From there, the film cuts back to the office where Frank and Freddy are sitting. Before Freddy asks Frank what the weirdest thing he has ever seen was, Frank looks out the window, takes a deep breath and says, "Smells like rain." When discussing the whole *Night of the Living Dead* story, Freddy refers to it as "one of the bestest movies there ever was" to which Frank concurs "damn right."

Both versions unfold in pretty much the same manner until Burt (Clu Gulager) appears on the scene to help Frank and Freddy. Looking to destroy the recently reanimated medical cadaver in the freezer, the trio unlocks the door, only to have the jaundiced corpse tackle Burt. Topping over a group of skeletons, Burt is heard yelling out, "It bit me, the son of a bitch!" a revealing line not heard in the release print.

The introduction of Ernie the mortician (Don Calfa) is also substantially longer in the earlier cut. Here, Ernie spends several minutes working on his subject, methodically examining the body and even going so far as to staple several sections of the corpse's face. Burt and company then arrive on the scene and bring Ernie up to speed on their plight. After Ernie agrees to the use of his crematorium, a small extra bit of dialogue occurs. When Frank states that he could operate the crematory, instead of the scene cutting, the camera stays on both him and Freddy as Freddy states, "Yeah, but who would want to?"

Later, once Ernie becomes aware of the sick status of Frank and Freddy, he quickly calls the paramedics. In the workprint, there is a short bit where Ernie calls information to get the number for Emergency Medical Services. The medics arrive, only to inform the ill duo that they are "technically not alive." When the paramedics step aside to discuss the situation, Freddy questions what they are saying. The workprint saves the medics response of "it's all right. We're just talking about the equipment," before cutting to the punks' frantic talk about their encounter with the Tar Man in the basement of the warehouse.

The punks' discussion is significantly longer and audible since it is not covered by the Tall Boys song "Take a Walk." After listing their options (call the cops, etc.), Casey informs the group that she saw Freddy heading into the mortuary. The group elects to head over there, establishing the real motivation for them to go out into the cemetery in the middle of a rainstorm.

Cutting back to the embalming room, the medics perform a series of reflex tests on Frank and Freddy to no avail before they head out to their ambulance to get some stretchers. As the paramedics leave, the camera stays on our sick duo, slowly zooming in as Frank leans over to Freddy and apologetically says, "Sorry son." The trio of Spider, Scuz and Tina then arrive at the funeral home. A-



ter Ernie answers the door at gunpoint, there is a brief extra shot where he enters the embalming room, stating, "Burt, we got a problem" to which Burt quickly replies, "Like what?"

After Ernie discovers the dead paramedics and all hell begins to break loose, an alternate take is used in the workprint when the group tries to use the phone in Ernie's office. A static, wide shot of the group is used as Ernie tries dialing out. The lights flicker briefly and the window behind Ernie remains open the entire time, as opposed to him closing it and pulling down the shutters, which is what happens in the release print.

A different take is also used when Burt offers to explain to the punks what exactly happened to Frank and Freddy. The following dialogue takes place after Burt reveals he doesn't know what kind of chemical they were exposed to:

Spider: "What the hell does the chemical do?"

Burt: "Well, somehow, I'm not sure how, it brings the dead bodies back to life.

Literally back to fucking life!"

Scuz: "Oh Christ!"

After Scuz bites the dust and the remaining humans capture the female half-corps, a brief yet exciting bit occurs. When Ernie asks the restrained corpse, "Can you hear me?" it replies, "Yes, I can hear you." This differs significantly from the drawn out "Yes" reply that was used in the release print. During this whole interrogation, much more of the dutch camera angle framing Ernie and the corpse is used and, on an interesting side note, a different voice is used for the female zombie.

Things run in the same manner in both versions until the scuffle in the chapel between Tina and Freddy. After Freddy announces that brains are the only thing that can curb his suffering, Tina jumps up and hides behind a podium, which Freddy immediately knocks to the floor. Tina then goes for the doors, only to have a zombieified Frank pop up from between a pair of benches and lash out at her. Freddy throws Tina into a metal candleholder (the same one she tosses at him in the release print) and lunges on top of her. It is here that the close-up shot of Freddy's foamy mouth is inserted just before Tina kicks him off her with both feet. Burt, Ernie and Spider show up and subdue Freddy with the acid. A brief shot of Frank high-tailing it out of the chapel is inserted here before the group locks up the blind Freddy.

Once back in the embalming room, there is a moment in the workprint where Ernie consoles the hysterical Tina by saying:

"Don't you worry about Freddy and Frank. You see, they've gone to heaven and those things out there are just dead bodies...that want to eat our brains."

It is Ernie's mentioning of brains that prompts the half-corps to begin shouting "Brains! Brains! Brains!" on the

table.

Frank's self-cremation is placed differently in the workprint and longer. After Ernie announces that his ankle is broken, the workprint cuts to a close-up of Frank. The camera slowly dollies back to reveal him crouching on the floor next to the bench in the crematorium room. Frank stands and faces the incinerator. A tipsy shot from Frank's point of view appears before cutting to the shot of Frank starting the machine and kissing his wedding ring.

Meanwhile, the remaining survivors decide it is best to head for the police cars. The workprint contains different dialogue pertaining to the favor that Burt owes Ernie:

Ernie: "You know that favor that you owe me?"

Burt: "Yeah?"

Ernie: "No matter what happens, don't name it after me."

Burt: "You big shot."

Tina: "What if you guys don't make it?"

Burt: "You got to think positive little lady."

This new dialogue is enlightening because it references something Burt said earlier in the film to Frank and Freddy ("Whatever happens, don't name it after me"), establishing that Ernie and Burt are true friends who know each other through and through.

Burt and Spider eventually make it to the Uneeda warehouse and get to the phone in the basement. More expository dialogue occurs in Burt's phone call to the police. His first conversation with the police is as follows:

"Police, thank God! We're calling from the Uneeda Medical Supply warehouse on East Central. We're inside your blockade and we need help...they just put me on hold for Christ's sake!"

Burt is transferred to the blockade in the rain. He informs the officer of the situation, leading the cop to hold the phone away from his ear and shout:

"Mike, got a guy here who says its rabies. Get the medical examiner down here in one hell of a hurry."

The commander turns his attention back to Burt on the phone:

"Now just sit tight mister. We're gonna send somebody in to get you out but first of all you got to tell me exactly where you are."

Burt begins to detail the exact location of the warehouse just before he is told to hold on again because of the growing noise. The police then become official zombie chow, as Burt and the others hear their screams over the phone.

The scene where General Glover receives Burt's information is also extended in the workprint. The shot starts on the moon outside the General's bedroom window



and gradually pans over to the General and his wife sleeping in bed. After Gen. Glover is informed of the situation, his wife asks him, "Is this it?" Once inside his office, the General informs his superior of the problem and states that "It looks like our worst case scenario."

The short scene at the mobile artillery also showcases some extra footage. The shot of the missile being loaded is extended, as a mechanical arm pulls the missile casing down and then another arm pushes it forward into the barrel. After entering the coordinates, the gunnery sergeant reports, "Ready on this end, sir!" His superior then is heard saying, "Fire!"

The film then ends on a completely different note. After the bomb hits Louisville, instead of the General summing up the damage, various images of destruction are shown accompanied by the following voice over:

"The image you are seeing is the fireball cast by a low yield tactical nuclear artillery shell. More than twenty square blocks of industrial Louisville were destroyed in this explosion which was officially described as a petrol chemical refinery accident. Over four thousand persons died from the immediate effects of the blast. Studies by the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, as well as the Jefferson County Health Inspector, have shown a 1200% increase in the incidents of leukemia and infant mortality among the residents of the area. These and other complaints from survivors of the Fourth of July Louisville refinery disaster have led to Environmental Protection Agency to order 500 tons of soil removed from the area. At the time of this filming, that soil is residing in 175 railroad cars parked on an unused line in South Dakota."

The film ends with a shot of a railroad car, packed high with the contaminated dirt, slowly coming to a halt on the railway.

While the aforementioned earlier cut of *Return Of The Living Dead* may run longer than the release print, it is still inferior. Obviously, a lot of work edits were made in order to tighten the film up, which worked to an amazing degree. The release print, with the inclusion of the punk songs, is a funtous beast where the action and dialogue moves fast. Unfortunately, the original ending is far superior to the one used in the released version. The disaster stock footage with voiceover narration explaining the results of the blast has more of a documentary feel and perfectly complements the opening disclaimer of the entire film being based on true events. Regardless, the bonus scenes are a treat to see, giving hungry fans a bit more meat for one of their favorite cinematic snacks. With the impending DVD release of *Return Of The Living Dead* by MGM in 2002, fans can only hope that some of this early footage will be included.



ISLAND OF DEATH (1975) d: Nico Mastorakis
1hr 43m (aka *Island of Perversion, Psychic Killer 2, Devils in Mykonos, A Craving for Lust*)
Region 0 PAL DVD Allstar Pictures, Ltd

Jealously revered by some as a sublimely twisted, Underground Classic, on par with the likes of *Last House on the Left* (1972) and *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974), this certifiably sick fuck of a flick must, at the very least, be unhesitatingly added to your "just-when-you-thought-you'd-seen-it-all" file. If voyeuristic, goat-fucking, incestual, homophobic, vigilante slasher fare fries your burger, then hey, Bunky, here's your Le Grande Triple Supreme with onions, extra cheese and chili fries. Director Nico Mastorakis has described *Island of Death* as a "recipe" picture: full of all the violence, sex, nudity, gore and controversial material required for an exploitation pedigree as well as "a means of survival during tough times." When times weren't so tough, Mastorakis could be found behind the camera on such mainstream fare as *Blind Date* (1984), a convoluted thriller shot in Greece starring Kierste (uh-huh, that one) Alley and Joseph Bottoms, which earned a decent "2 1/2 stars" from Leonard Maltin's *Movie and Video Guide*. *Island of Death*, an oozing, pustulent, running sore of a film, that threatens derailment at every turn, belongs to an entirely different universe than one inhabited by Maltin's minions. Shot for around 30,000 bucks, *Island of Death* boasts a decidedly non-professional crew of fumbling actors ("You speak English? You're in."), kinky sex, wamon nekikiddy, graphic gore, beastiality and a molar-grinding, nails-on-the-blackboard pop soundtrack warbled by some squid who's apparently been gargling Drano and nail polish remover. Whew, man, and that ain't the half of it!

A young tourist couple, introducing themselves as husband or wife, or cousins, depending on the occasion, rent a small apartment on the dinky Greek isle of Mykonos. Sharp-eyed, nostalgic Euro Horror aficionados will undoubtedly note the eerie similarity of the narrow streets and sun-drenched villas and wernily recall Tisa Farrow's walkabout in Jolint' Joe D'Amato's towering classic of auto-cannibalism and fetus-scarfing, *Anthropophagous: The Beast* (1981). But before you can even utter "Zorba the Geek," our frisky couple is making *The Beast With Two Backs* in a phone booth while Christopher, the stud muffin and goat-bonker, phones home to Mom and let's her listen to their rutting ritual. Oh, my, but these two are just so naughty-naughty...but more on that later.

Within a day or two of their arrival, both Christopher and Celia are plying their trade: fucking, photography, filth and fantasy—finally settling on the role of exterminating angels, as Chris bellows, "If this island's full of shit, I'll help clean it up!" This idea to rid Mykonos of malignant miscreants comes on rather suddenly and unexpectedly, much like Bill Paxton's overnight epiphany in *Frailty* (2002), when the angels call on him to "destroy the demons." No matter, all parties concerned tackle their

This Twisted World:

ISLAND OF DEATH

by
Chas. Balun





anything prepare you for the Oh Sweet Irony Phase of our program? It turns out our stalwart Moral Crusaders, our Vigilante Annihilators and Island Purification Team are really...[sound of breath holding, two full beats at least]...brother and sister! Eeeeeekkk! Oh shit, man! Imagine what Alanis Morissette could do with this. Well, these two have just got no right, no right at all.

Finally, some dumbass, room-temp IQ cops come aboard and The Chase is on. While being pursued by what is perhaps the slowest moving police vehicle in cinematic history, the terminally lame, tone-deaf mutant pop score creeps:



divine mission with unfettered abandon and embrace their new calling without reservations. The stakes are raised dramatically after Chris and Celia crucify one fornicator and pour whitewash down his throat, as both our kinky kids realize the magnitude and complexity of their cleansing crusade. And man, do they hate homos! One prancing dandy gets gutted by sword while cowering in a doorway whilst his erstwhile butt biscuit has his brains blown out while felling a particularly nifty revolver. Lesbians fare no better. After seducing Celia, one carpet muncher, pitifully described as "dirty Leslie, bloody lesbian and heroin addict," gets shot up, has booze pored down her throat and then her face is burnt to a crisp by a jerrybuilt blowtorch.

Yeh, and then there's the wild max 'n' match cataloging of haicings; impalement by hand toni, copious nudity and soft core sex; travelogue scenery; and uh...goat abuse! This particular sequence smacks you upside the head somethin' fierce, man. When left sexually thwarted one morning, Christopher spots a small goat bleating in the courtyard and tenderly approaches. Dispensing with small talk, dinner or even a cheap well drink during Happy Hour, Chris is soon behind the bushes bonkin' this unfortunate barmyardquadriped. Afterwards, when he's...uh...he's...(words fail here) had his way with the goat, he pulls a knife and, apparently fearing some farmhouse gossip about his intraspecies coupling, kills his cloven-footed paramour. Though there's no Humane Society seal of approval here, the stunt goat appeared remarkably calm and clearly unimpressed during the ritual sacrifice.

Christopher and Celia soon find something to despise about nearly everyone. To their rapidly growing list of Mykonos Misfits they soon add black private dicks, horny old hetero bags and dirty hippies with bad teeth. Another real crowd pleaser, sure to raise an eyebrow or two (no dicks, though, they will wither instantaneously), has Christopher beating, then pissing all over this howling, hom dog old bag who's soon gargling something that ain't lemonade. Chris trusses her up, carries her whimpering ass outside and dumps her in front of a handy piece of heavy earth-moving machinery. Now, add to your growing list of splatter firsts—Decapitation By Bulldozer. Well now, they're building up quite a head of steam here; but wait...Can

*"Mother, I see the wonders of the day,
Millions of people left like clay
Destitution 'Understanding' (repeated)
Get the sword. Get the sword."*

Apparently eluding an intensive one car police dragnet, Chris and Celia are befriended by a fuckin' retard shepherd-troglydote with one eyebrow who's quite obviously been on the losing end of a severe whupping with the Butt Ugly Stick. Igor offers them food and shelter from the shitstorm, but wants something in return. Being the kind of swinging dick country boy who's sworn off sheep pussy, he's soon mounting Celia doggie-style while Christopher snaps away with his Pervo-cam. Sensing the need for leadership within the pack, Igor gets proactive and displays remarkable latent leadership skills, much to the delight of a sexually-sated Celia. He kicks Chris' ass, farts on him and then slips some Greek sausage up his poop chute before dumping him into a lime pit. Celia enjoys some sloppy seconds; and dismissing her prurient incestual longings, appears blissfully intoxicated by the magic of this shepherd's staff. When it begins to rain, Christopher cries out to his sister, but is soon burned alive by the activated lime. *Gosh sakes!*

"Though there's no Humane Society seal of approval here, the stunt goat appeared remarkably calm and clearly unimpressed during the ritual sacrifice."



This film simply defies criticism. It's either so bad it's good, or else it's just so fucked up it's *good-bad*, but *not* evil. Boasting a robust body count, major splat (by '75 standards), funky sex and inventive kills, *Island of Death* does share the same "underground" vibe of many of its contemporaries, including *Last House on the Left* (1972), *I Spit on Your Grave* (1980) or *Last House on Dead End Street* (1973). One thing it *doesn't* share with these other films is a genuine sense of dread or menace. Many of the set-ups appear like cartoonish porno scenarios that always include the money shot, but do so just as a service to convention. Give me a scowling, hyperventilated David Hess waving a sheep implement about in either *Last House on the Left* or *House on the Edge of the Park* (1984) and you'll quickly see the yawning chasm between menace and simple, bloody mischief.

**"Now, add to your growing list of splatter firsts—
Decapitation by Bulldozer."**



Island of Death remains a genre curiosity—a full-throttle freakshow frequently banging on all eight cylinders, maybe. But it still seems a bit complacent, smug even, that it's successfully tickled many of your taboos and left a skanky sludgemark in your drawers to remember it by. Hey, not so fast, pard. If I'm somehow really missing the point here, failing to rightfully acknowledge a master's work or trumpet this film as the Undiscovered Underground Masterpiece it may be to some, then, shut fuckin' howdy! *De gustibus non est disputandum*, bro? Or as one lobster says in the film, "Tell me where you want me to bite you." Right here, motherfucker!

Interview with NICO MASTORAKIS

by Will Wilson

Growing up, when did you decide to become a film-maker?

Growing up in a nice, small neighborhood in Athens, was more of a "my life as a movie" story. At the age of 8, I had my own make-shift hand cranked projector and gathered film clips from the local open-air cinema. A sort of "Cinema Paradiso" love affair with movies. My film-making passion was expressed in the inexpensive means of stills photography, but I held my first movie camera when I was 18.

Regarding *ISLAND OF DEATH*, you stated that you didn't intend to make a cult movie, just a film to allow you to obtain future financing. How do you feel that it has become a cult film and probably the film people will remember you by? And was it successful in its original intent?

In film, when you are perceived in a way much more different than your original intentions, you are wondering "what did I do wrong". In my case, I'm wondering "what did I do right". I don't think that the movie industry will remember me for "Island Of Death", although this is and will always be the little movie which started it all in my film career. It did provide the means of survival during tough times and, in some ways, it did provide the seed financing needed for me to persist in making "The Greek Tycoon", at a time when the name "Onassis" triggered potential lawsuits. If it wasn't for "Island", I'd given up the hardships of pursuing a studio deal for "The Greek Tycoon".

With your script you set out to be violent and disgusting in your content. Was there anything that would have been too repulsive for you?

In recipe movies, you set a course of pushing the envelope with no boundaries. This script was written with one thing in mind: To make what I naively thought was "a commercial exploitation movie". I had no idea what that meant, as I had never dealt with international sales, trapped for a long time in television production in Greece. This "outing" of sorts, was inspired by the past boxoffice success of violent exploitation movies which crossed over and became classics, like "Texas Chainsaw Massacre". So, when I was writing the script, everything I wouldn't do in my life, I'd put it in the movie. The only stuff I wouldn't write, was the stuff that looked expensive to translate into images. Anything low budget, would do. And it did.

Did you ever have any difficulty convincing your actors to act out the offensive scenarios you dreamt up?

Hell, no. You never have any problem to convince actors to act out bad stuff. Actually, you don't even have a case of "convincing". Actors who need work don't need to be convinced. And in this case, most of my actors were not even actors before the movie. Some, I picked out of the streets of Athens, some even

In winter-time Mykonos. Casting was a simple process: "You speak English? You're in". Jens Ryel was a model, Bob Belling had made some Greek movies, Jessica Dublin was in every Greek movie there was, some others did voice-over work in Athens. I simply gathered what English-speaking material I could find, I didn't have a single actor or actor-to-be, say "no" to the script or the scenes, when we filmed them.

The film contains a running motif of voyeurism with the killers photographing their crimes. Is this a comment on the audience as well, as they too are watching (and possibly enjoying) what unfolds before them?

We're all fascinated by voyeurism. That's probably why we like film. We like to watch. That's why "Big Brother" became a hit show. We all love to stare at our neighbor's window, even when nothing goes on in the room. The two protagonists in the movie, photograph their murders and then there is a scene where the get off, when the processed images come to life in the red light. That's pushing voyeurism into the red line of perversion, but it illustrates also the audience's desire to see more, more from the safety of their seat. And that's not perversion at all. It's immense curiosity, a platform which makes filmmakers explore, dare and taste the extreme.

One of the most memorable things about the film is the music. Why were those upbeat selections chosen?

It's like casting against the grain. Music is like casting. You don't do stereotype casting, if you're anti-stereotype yourself. Many years later, when I was casting "Blind Date", I had two choices for the female lead: Kirstie Alley and Sherron Tweed. Sherron was closer to the physical description of the role. But I chose Kirstie, because she was the "anti-stereotype" image. I always cast music "against the grain" and that made me work with amazingly talented composers like the later Stanley Myers ("Deerhunter") and Hans Zimmer. Upbeat songs in "Island" was nothing more but a thick red line under the darkness of the characters.

The film is heavy on visceral shocks. However, the biggest shock at the film's end is entirely psychological. Why?

Visceral shocks for 1975, yes. But since then, film makers have surpassed those shocks, and they keep inventing new ways to pump up the audience's adrenaline. By comparison to even television movies, "Island", today, looks peeess. As for the ending, it again falls under my "against the grain" MD in movies. You "train" your audience to expect something climactic which will never come and that's the ultimate cheat - that's entirely psychological.

You have said that censorship/ratings boards are an antiquated system. Where did you encounter the most trouble with ISLAND OF DEATH?

In the UK of course, where the medieval censorship system is still in power and still "protecting" those "innocent" adults from watching what they'd choose. I understand the Brits for having such a stupid system empowered to control their lives. They need to have a forbidden fruit hanging in front of their mouth all the time. And that ridiculous, punitive, anti-constitutional, dictatorial censor's board makes it simply more attractive for film buffs to seek the banned version and buy DVDs on the Internet.

Conversely, where was the film received the best?

Where else? In the UK of course!

Have you ever been approached to do a remake or sequel? Would you?

Nah. Not if my filmic career depended on it, I wouldn't. So many people said "go ahead, do it" and I thought "what a shitehead". I understand the reasoning for making a sequel to a hugely successful movie, and I love sequels, especially those which are better than the originals. But "Island Of Death" doesn't deserve a sequel, it was a "nothing movie", concocted by necessity to make money and that's not an inspirational motivation to go back to those roots 27 years later and mock up your good and honest intentions with bad and dishonest ones.

A lot of directors who begin their career with a scandalous film find it hard to do outlive the stigma of their first effort. Did ISLAND OF DEATH hinder your career as a filmmaker at all?

Not for a minute. On the contrary, when the movie was sold for theatrical release in the UK (eventually chopped) back in 1975 and GTD Films put it out on the big screen, there were several trade paper reviews that praised both the movie and my "skills". I remember "Screen International" 's quote "when Mastorakis is a big director, this low budget movie will be considered as a cult film". I know I disappointed the critic for not making the "big director" status, but at least half of his prophecy was sort of justified.

You were very instrumental in the recent DVD release of ISLAND OF DEATH. However, the release is in the PAL format. Any plans on doing a NTSC release in the future?

It took me a good two weeks on an uncompressed Final Cut Pro system to cut out frames of film (since the negative was stupidly taped at the joints back in the 70s and the joints would jump on the transfer and the tape would show for a frame). I cut some 650 frames out seamlessly and I did some crucial color corrections which had not been done at the Urse Diamond telecine. As I was the DP for at least half the movie, I knew where to touch up and where not to.

Then I added sound FX where I thought the originals were weak but I was careful not to overdo it, so that the movie will not move unreasonably toward some high end effects. The sound of the movie, was then re-processed (from the original optical track of an older video transfer), most of the pops and cracks of the optical were removed and the overall quality was again kept close to the original mono mix. I didn't want to overdo it, as the value of preserving a movie is not to victimize it under the pretense that you "care for it". Let it live its own life, without extra bells and whistles and without extra preservatives.

I was even tempted to do 16:9 but since the intent here was to preserve the original, I ended up with 4x3 instead. Will there be a NTSC version? It's not economically sound but one of these days, there will be a US distributor who'll fall in love with the idea of paying the money to buy the rights and then, yes, there will be one.

**"And that's not perversion at all.
It's immense curiosity, a platform
which makes filmmakers explore,
dare, and taste the extreme."**

Nikos Mastorakis
Director *Island of Death*

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CONFESIONS Of a Part-Time —On Call— SHUNTER

by Chas. Balun

Anchor Bay Entertainment's upcoming release of Brian Yuzna's SOCIETY will feature the uncensored, wide-screen European version, director's commentary and the theatrical trailer. Your REDitor supplied the lower notes, which are now presented for the very first time in the original. Full-length writer's cut.

The alarm buzzes me up at 4 a.m. Goddamn. I'm gonna beat this fuckin' L.A. traffic. I am not a victim. I'm in the shower by 4:10. No coffee this time. No piss breaks on the 405, where, god-willing, I'll be in a moving car shortly, on my way to Culver City and the set of Brian Yuzna's new movie, *Society*. I'm covering the flick for Fangoria Magazine and am scheduled to interview Yuzna around 9 a.m. Why am I on the road at 4:45 a.m. for a nine o'clock appointment less than forty miles away? If you have to ask, you don't know El Lay.

Feeling totally empowered and proactive, his shit together, packed, oiled and ready, I'm on the San Diego Freeway North for a full 3 1/2 minutes before slowing to a creepy-crawl speed behind 6 billion flickering red tail lights. Looking over at the coffee-swilling, suited and sassy lobsters off to both sides, dressed to kill at 5 a.m., I silently contemplate *The Meaning of all Things*. The forty mile drive takes just shy of 3 fuckin' hours, but because I'm such a take-charge, multi-tasking urbanite, I'm still an hour early.

The *Society* set is located in some shit-hole industrial park, the kind of place you don't even think of parking your fifteen-year-old Plymouth Valiant on the streets for more than ninety seconds. Since there's no "Society Welcomes Chas. Balun and Fangoria Magazine" banner out front to provide guidance, I follow the donuts. Movie people sit around a lot and eat shit like donuts and Chee-tos. The early morning, cloying scent of French cruisers hangs in my nostrils as I duck inside this large, dark building. I ask some fat guy with powdered sugar on his chin, anyway, all over his lips and nose, where I can find Brian. He points, chews, swallows and burps. I walk down a fake hallway, past a three-walled bedroom set, and see more donuts and more fat guys with headsets on sitting around watching small, portable TVs. Nobody appears to be working on anything but a junk food headache. Before I meet Brian, I get *The Tour*. Lots of really fuckin' weird rubber thongies strewn about, courtesy of screaming Mad George Studios. One piece features a rear angle on a lower body, with a pair of bent legs and an ass with a really big hole in it too. I mean a really big hole, large enough to stick your head through. I assume this will film much better than it looks. Other limbs, torsos, tentacles and purple-veined tubular monstrosities are spread about, with weird-ass shit stuck in their orifices at highly unlikely angles. Kinda looks like a twisted, low-rent porno shoot with horrifically deformed, mutant abortions mating with space aliens afflicted with elephantiasis. I'm told that screaming Mad George is a big fan of Spanish painter Salvador Dali, and these things are part of the screaming One's "surrealistic vision." Again, I assume they'll look much better on film.

Brian is soon pointed out to me and I approach in my most polished, professionally journalistic manner. Since Yuzna produced *Re-Animator* (1985), one of my all-time favorite flicks, there'll be none of my smarmy, cynical and predatory attack moves on display—for now, anyway. The Philippine-born Yuzna has had a pretty damned eclectic career to date: pumpkin seller, carpenter, abstract painter, real estate agent, art and religion major in college, so he's open, gregarious and chatty. He winks me over quickly. "I hate movies that don't go far enough. I like to be outrageous." He sighs, looks away, and admits, "I do tend to get a little too explicit sometimes." Cool. We're on the same page here. On producing *Re-Animator*, he describes both director Stuart Gordon and himself as "...crazed, serious horror fans." He adds, "Stuart had a TV script, a 50 page treatment anyway, on *Re-Animator*. I knew carrying heads around was one of my favorite things, so I took all my money, borrowed some from friends and made my own movie."

With *Society*, Yuzna confesses a degree of trepidation over the production. "I can see my own inexperience and a little bit of naivete here," he says. "But I love it because it's original. We're not aping anything. It's a very nontraditional monster." My phrase here.

"Kinda looks like a twisted, low-rent porno shoot with horrifically deformed, mutant abortions mating with space aliens afflicted with elephantiasis."

After my interview is complete, I'm led beneath an elaborate arch, inscribed with an ominous message: "Abandon Hope All Ye Who Enter Here." Film people—whadda ya gonna do with 'em? Beyond lies the main living room set, where the climactic sequence, the one involving the weird-thrash-shit ritual of "shunting," will be filmed. I also get to meet the monster. It really defies description, but that's never stopped me before. It's about 25 or so feet long, with tentacles, multiple mouths it can only guess, it's so surreal!!!!!!!, unnatural, circles, deformed limbs, purple veiny-things and one shroud of slime slathered on it. It just lies there, inert, in a slightly crumpled state, since to achieve movie life it needs people on the inside and puppeteers on the outside. Brian begins prepping the cast and crew (there's probably about 30 or so of us) for *The Ritual*. This "shunting thing." Tough to pin down exactly, this thoroughly twisted activity involves copious exchanges of precious bodily fluids: near necroticity, lots of licking, sucking and slurping, and gallons of methacyl slime (think *Alien* drool). Yuzna looks my way. "Hey, Chas. Want to be in this scene?" In my terminally delusional fanboy brain, I muse dreamily, "Sure, what's a half hour, 45 minutes, for the love of movies?" Hay-de-fuckin'-bar, I'm positioned behind this oversize sofa, near a lamp, and instructed to lose my shirt. We're supposed to be sorta naked here. Next, a prop girl comes around with a plastic bucket brimming with slime and we all get wet. Very wet. We're also told to lick, drool, suck and caress the beast in front of us. The cute extra in the sexy little teddy, ensconced in one of the monster's portals directly beneath us, reminds us not to cry any of the above on her shirt.

While Yuzna is blocking out the shot, I ask one of the S&M crew if, by chance, they've got any prosthetic tongues wagging about. You see, a few years prior, I had some kinda creepy cancer surgery I don't worry, I won't bore you with the Big C Survivor horseshit, you got a 50/50 chance. I was the lucky one in my family, my father got the short end. Besides losing the lymph nodes in my neck, and having a fingersize hole punched in my throat to accommodate a tracheotomy, they cut off half my friggin' tongue! So, being orally-challenged and tongue-tied, I wasn't about to be able to lick much of anything set in front of me. They finally did come up with a pretty good skin-on number, that unfortunately, popped out of my yap around Take Three or Four and wedged itself somewhere beneath the sofa's cushions. The aforementioned, teddy-clad babe was certainly not going to buy the old lost-my-tongue shtick and allow unlimited groping for said organ, so I had to just fake it. I end up in a couple of close-ups, even, but you certainly won't see anything slithering in and out of my plehole.

The scene is shot again and again and again. The slime buckets keep coming as the beast bucks, belches, lurches and undulates in a slow, spastic shunt. Semi-naked, slimed-up old

farts are crawling across the floor, showing far more flesh than your brain can safely process. Afternoon becomes night, night becomes morning. Seven hours of shunting now under my belt, I finally appreciate the cryptic message left on the archway leading to the set. After 20 or 30 or 125 more takes, we wrap for the day. I politely ask if there's a shower nearby. Methacryl goes on cool and creamy but rapidly becomes a skin-puckering, flakey, crusty kind of overaged K-Y jelly situation. No shower, I'm told. A towel, maybe? No towels. Somebody points out a temporary restroom. There's paper towels and toilet paper in there, she explains.

Driving home at 5 a.m., I toss around a couple of excuses in case I'm stopped by an even-vigilant member of the L.A. Portine Department for a possible DWI (Driving While Shunting). I look like a wasted, 250 lb. greasy haribo! coughed up by some god-knows-what-the-fuck.

Finally home, showered and tucked in for the night, I dream of a Shunter's Paradise-slimy sex, lascivious licking, sensual slurping and...donuts.

"Semi-naked, slimed-up old farts are crawling across the floor, showing far more flesh than your brain can safely handle."

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At the Altar of Anthropophagy: Exhuming the Ensanguined Ephemera of **THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE**

A Horror Fiend's Travelogue

by Leon Marcelo

*"Your stupid epitaph rots
In the dead-letter file
A necrophile's smile beguiles
Your remains thus defiled
The decrepit laughter echoes
In the now vacant burial plot
Decayed, dead, and decomposed
But in peace you'll never rot"*
- EXHUMED
"The Deadest of the Dead"

Red Reader, the year was nineteen hundred and seventy-four. It was the year of my birth amidst the nuclear wastelands of New Jersey, it was also the very same year that a little film was shot out of the befouled, worm-ridden bowels of the collective American unconscious, a grueling exercise in cinematic terrorism that would not so much change the face of celluloid horror as peel its wrinkled flesh from the grinning skull beneath. This film - no, its experience, for that is what it truly is for those who worship at its eternally offal-adorned altar - that spilled out in a steaming sanguinolent surge from the slit throat of the rotting ruins of the American Dream was *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*.

Even though I have seen *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* more times than I can count now since its horrors were first burned into the retina of my mind's eye thirteen years after both it and yours cruelly were loosed into existence, Tobe Hooper's grisly buzzsaw opus, an excruciating homage to the gruesome regimes of man-eating, demons for me and coffinfuls of other like-minded fiends one of the utter epitomes of modern American horror. Along with the likes of George Romero's zombieified masterpiece *Night of the Living Dead* and Roger "Victor Jaster" Watson's Grand Guignol shuffler *Last House on Dead End Street*, *Chainsaw* whirled in this unrelenting epoch where visceral car-

nage was king. Gone was the horror of the days of yore, a safe sort of escapism found in the arms of the *Wolfman* or the *Mummy* where the horrors retreated back under the bed with the rolling of the credits and the comforting restoration of the status quo. But *Chainsaw* was cut from a far more tarnished and transgressive cloth. For this species of cinematic horror-beast left your world, like its victims, debauched, defiled, and desecrated - a quivering, gutted carcass stewing in its own piss. The savage misanthropy and ferocious nihilism of the Texas sun-scorched atrocity that is Hooper and company's *Chainsaw* was born out of the disillusioned idealism of the 1960s, the rape and ruin of its "peace and love" rhetoric. The film's inverted fury tale nature represented its makers' bitter skepticism of the utopic safety promised by the American Dream, mirroring the horrors of the real world upon which they had been forced to feed since birth. *Chainsaw* stood as a seething "Fuck you!" in the face of this bankrupt illusion. To say it like it is, Red Reader, *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* drove a howling, oil-spitting chainsaw up the ass of Americana. It not only served to define the gloriously depraved age of 1970s drive-in horror but also set a standard for modern genre films that has rarely, if ever, been reached, let alone challenged. With its pseudo-documentary feel and surreally nightmarish spirit, the excruciating terror of *Chainsaw*'s exquisite corpse had, and has still, the same skull-splitting impact as the homicidal hammerblows of its Gunnar Hansen-essayed hulking fiberbutcher, the grue-lusting lord of the charnel house, "Leatherface." From the John Larroquette-narrated "true crime" introduction to the unforgettable final tableau of Leatherface's dance macabre against the rising Texas sun, it is a death-brain of mutilation hurling deep down into the utter depths of human darkness. Not many things can be called "godly," Red Reader, but is there any denying that *Chainsaw* is one of them?

And so, last June, after a semester spent reading select works from the nihilistic American Realism oeuvre with its unflinching portraits of the brutality of human nature, I could not think of a more fitting way to herald the end of such a study than with an autopsy of the still-purifying corpse of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*. With the dehumanizing atmosphere of such a "dog eat dog" ethos swirling about my gray matter, my mortuary bride and I wormed our way deep into the black heart of Texas to disturb some of the forever blood-stained Austin area locales that are *Chainsaw's* fostering legacy. So join us then, won't you, Red Reader, on our journey through the convoluted circuitry of that celluloid ode to human butchery and cannibalism, the one and only *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*!

When my unsuspecting wife and I stepped out of the air-conditioned confines of the Austin airport that weekday morning and felt the dry heat already creeping across our leader flesh, we knew that we were in Texas. While it was thankfully devoid of the choking miasma of humidity that makes New Jersey summers so abominable, this simmering Texas clime let us know what it must feel like to be a raw slab of beef broiling within the guts of an oven - and summer had only just begun to work up a sweat. But, fearless explorers of the neathermost reaches of the macabre that we are, we let the June heat set the deliciously surreal atmosphere for our expedition through *Chainsaw's* one-time cinematic shatters. And so, after checking into our tomb-away-from-tomb, we plunged our funeral (rented fuel-economic four-cylinder) coach straight down the hungry gullet of our carrion campaign of *Chainsaw's* domain of death. And as we began to hack our course through Austin and its surrounding burghs, we knew this accursed trip into the slithering anaw of one of horror-dom's most ravenous atrocities would be the proverbial be-all of our wealth of hard journeys when we copied a freshly exterminated armadillo painting the side of the scorching Texas blacktop a deliciously puz-



Ryan's Hills Pearls Grocery on Highway 304 in Bessie: The former charnel house bistro where Jim Sadow's "Cook" dished out his gastronomic blights. Although I looked about with my gore-mews eyes for a rat-basinet upon which some sweet young thing's torso was a-basking, I found only row upon row of the food stuffs found in any local convenience store. For while there was indeed much food to be found within, there were no carcasses visible to sate the cannibal that I am sad to say, Red Reader. But, I am pleased to say that, ghoulst of all, the decades-old gas pumps were just as dry as they had been on that ill-fated summer afternoon when Sally and her chainsaw-fodder cohorts rolled up to this human beef bistro.



cent shade of purple with its expelled viscera, a wendy farfeline sight as it was this same species of flattened Texas varmint that filled the screen seconds before the introduction of *Chainsaw's* doomed van-full of teenaged primate meat. Basking in the gurginous gutted glory of this fly-swarmed omen, we knew that our expedition had truly been deconsecrated by the hand of the gods of horror.

Bagdad Cemetery on Route 278 in Leander: It was here, at this wholly modest and well-kept boneyard that Edwin Neaf's deranged "Hitchhiker" performed his perverse graveside disservice, turning the exhumed bodies of the dead into the living corpse-art witnessed in *Chainsaw's* flesh bulb-it establishing shot. Although missing the carcasses accoutrements with which they had been hung in that grisly opening, it was not difficult to recognize the truncated column-topped gravemarker and cake-like above-ground tomb that had been the site of the Hitchhiker's ghastly neo-erotic artistry.



Quick Hill on Route 172 in Austin: Despite its decrepit state, we knew that this was the place! Up aged Old Country Road, hidden in the woods to the left atop Quick Hill, had been the mysterious house where those witless Texas teens would find nothing but maiming and mutilation at the malevolent hands of Leatherface and his freakish family of flesh-eaters. When the gruesome twosome of Hitchhiker and Leatherface chased the terror-maddened Sally after her escape from their impromptu dinner party, it was this very roadway that she fled down, only to be rescued from out of that mouth of madness by the pick-up truck driver. And it was also along the road that Leatherface later performed his lumbering, chainsaw-accompanied piquette before the ruddy backdrop of the Texas dawn. At the gated-off foot of Quick Hill, we goshounds two stood in utter devotion to the gruesome and grisly glory of the human-butcherer clan of cannibals' familial slaughterhouse, the genre's most infamous den of mortal devourment.



The Kingsland Old Town Grill on Route 1431 in Kingsland: After *Chainaw* was filmed here in 1973, the one-time anonymous backwoods abattoir which had been drenched in the carnosus cacophony of howling chainsaws and human screams suffered the abuse of various acts of drink and drug-induced vendakem; however, like the bruised and battered Sally at the end of the film, the late-nineteenth-century domicile received its own salvation in 1990: it was separated into seven pieces and then moved, piece by piece over the course of five days, seventy or so miles property of the The Antlers Inn on King Street. Despite its masterfully sandvasted and pristinely white-painted facade, its porch-full of cursey, grandmotherly knick-knacks, and its flower-bad-bordered chierophyllous lawn, the sanguiniferous spirit of this vacera-spattered abode of the anthropophagi began to show through such a ruse of refr-

ahment. After we had ordered our lunch, the opaque coming not from a menu but rather the acout lat read to us by our waitress, we sat there with our wide bloodshot eyes in con-



stant motion, our hunger to be slaked not by any of the down-home grub that would soon be served out to us but, unnaturally, the verminous traces of *Chainaw*'s celluloid gutfuck that had drawn us, like maggots to rot-blossoming carnos, all the way out here! Red Reader, it was as surreal an experience as watching the film itself to sit there, surrounded by senior citizens chowing down upon the Grill's lunch special in a room whose creepiest decor was a huge cow's head with toothpick in its mouth, discussing exactly which stomach-churning act of nastiness had happened where. The front left dining room had been the family's "living room" in *Chainaw*, its ghoulish adornments inspired by the Ed Gain school of interior design with furniture accented with and entirely fashioned from bones, skulls, and leather-made flaps of human skin, upon whose leather-straw floor Pam had fallen just before her date with a meathook in what continues on today at the back of the house as the Grill's kitchen. The middle dining room behind it had been the family's own, where the bound and gagged Sally was made the terrified dinner guest at the disgusting banquet table of that lovable homovore horrors. This scene utterly rakes of the disquieting tension and unsettling violence that makes *Chainaw* such an archetypal study of the fetid depths of degradation and depravity. And no one, Red Reader, no one who has ever sat before *Chainaw* can forget it. After our repast, I rose from the table to use the head and walked down the main hallway. As I got to the end and the doorway that led out into the corridor beyond, I must tell you, Red Reader that, despite of red purveyor of the gutfucked that you know me to be, I still looked about rather cautiously before stepping through as it was at this one-time animal skull-adorned entrance that Leatherface was unleashed upon the unsuspecting underworld of horror, his reign of terror heralded by the holocaustic hammering of his sledge and the ominous clinging slam of that steel slaughterhouse door. Before we left, we took a few crime scene photos of the still-dripping mounds of this former anthropophagous chephouse and then happily paid our bill, money well spent not so much for the home cooked chew but, instead of course, the chance to sip within the walls of the house which made chainsaws and cannibalism sordid staples of the horror genre. And as we stepped out upon that porch again, where the only teeth you will find these days being those fallen out of the mouth of some ectogenarian after a gut-busting meal of chicken-triad what have you, and looked out over the Kingsland Old Town Grill's picturesque dgs, we two gleeful gore-manda of all that a ghastly thanked the horror-gods below for the opportunity to visit a locale such as this, so deeply entrenched in the bleak, grue-fied tern of the macabre, a place known to revering fiends the world over as the atrocious altar of unadulterated anthropophagy, that witnessed the brutally realistic yet righteously phantasma-gore-ic orgy of utter horror and sickness that is *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*.



With our meal at the Grill now eaten and our pilgrimage to the refurbished (yet still desanctified) slaughterhouse now made, we drove the miles back to Austin for the last stop on our horrid agenda, the Cinema Four Theater. Located in, what else, "The Village" strip mall at 2700 Anderson Lane, it was here that *Chainsaw* premiered back in '74. Did any of these in attendance, the small-time film-makers such as Tobe Hooper, co-writer Kim Henkel, or director of photography Daniel Pearl, the underpaid actors and actresses such as Gunnar Hansen, Edwin Neal, and Marilyn Burns, their head-shaking family and head-scratching friends, know the impact, a true and utter paradigm shift if there ever was one, that their little film, first named *Headcheese* and then *Leatherface*, upon not only the genre of the horror film but all of cinema? Literary horror, from the "splatterpunk" grotesques of a young Clive Barker to the putrescently purple prose of Poppy Z. Brite? Or music, from the buzzsawing punk of the Ramones to the grating, grume-gargling "wheat not meat, gore not war" death of Carcass? Unfortunately, I think not, Red Reader. And even if some of those who perpetrated this cinematic atrocity have gone on to birth anything that bears the bloodied mark left by *Chainsaw*, how can you blame them because, really, how could they?

Before I take my leave of you, Red Reader, I would like to thank a few fellow cryp-dwellers without whose help this cartoon campaign of ours would have been impossible: Tim Harden of the unbelievable *Chainsaw* shrine, www.texaschainsawmassacre.net, Brenda Johnson of the Austin Film and Music Office, Bill "Chop-Top" Mosley, Exploited Video for their *Texas Chainsaw Massacre - The Shocking Truth* video nasty; Tobe Hooper and the rest of the dismembers of that putrescent progenitor's cast and crew for giving this graveyard earth and cemeteries full of horror-fleas such as your gore-splattered scrivener something truly wretched to choke on, and, lastly but not leastly, my grim bride, Alycia.

And so, if you should perchance find yourself lurking through Austin and have an insatiable hankering for truly final taste of the mad and the macabre, then you would do well to grab a shovel and exhume some of these same Texas locales forever beinseared in the blackest of blood by *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*. You will not be disappointed! And, don't forget, Red Reader, if you should see a disheveled and drooling hitchhiker shambling down the side of the road eating and raving to himself out under the blistering Texas sun, let him fry out there with the dead arseholes! Until later, as always, let there be not!



"The film was born out of the disillusioned idealism of the 1960s. Chainsaw stood as a seething 'Fuck you!' in the face of this bankrupt illusion."

I Was A Guinea Pig for the FBI

by Chas. Balun

OFFICIAL COMMUNIQUE from DEEP RED WORLD HEADQUARTERS

Summer 2002

(Consider this as coming from the "horse's big mouth.")

Since it's been well over a decade that a little flap concerning Charlie Sheen, the Feds, a notorious episode of the twisted Japanese *Guinea Pig* series and your humble REDitor was first hurled onto the splatter scene, I feel it's high time to set the record straight. Believe me, pardis, everything you've read in the past is shit! Why didn't anybody just fucking ask me what the hell went down? Instead, the New Urban Myth grew and grew. Hard-fuckin'-har.

I did indeed, entertain a rather perverse glee in observing human nature's insatiable craving for celebrity-themed slaughterthons. Who the fuck knew the whole story except me? And, who really gave a shit? My hypercynical worldview was stoked relentlessly by the unsubstantiated reports that regularly surfaced in genre publications, chat rooms and other online vomitus detritus. Now, LISTEN UP!

A long time ago, in a gastrointestinal, galactic polyp far, far away, the saga begins...

For a special birthday treat to be shown at his weekend party, a former *Deep Red* staffer requested "the most disgusting" video I could assemble be sent via Second Day UPS to his home address. I complied, editing together the gloriously gory goods (no real-life atrocity stuff—I absolutely hate that shit) and prefaced the maniacal montage with a banner headline quote that read: "Anything worth doing...is worth overdoing."—Chas. Balun.

The first segment included one of the GP series' most provocative pieces—"*Flowers of Flesh and Blood*." Eeeek! Boy, did that work! Got raves from the B-Day boy and his party dogs, too. The rest of the tape was packed with standard issue cinematic splatter, as over-the-top as I could manage. The video was an undeniably revolting success. My job was done.

Later, I learned the tape was making the East Coast rounds, viewed by all manner of dorks, poseurs, spineless squids (Christina G, you know who you are) and clueless assbags who thought it was a real "snuff" film. Jesus H. Fucking Christ! I had written what I thought was a definitive article in the *Deep Red Special Edition* (1991) entitled "*Guinea Pig: Cutting Edge Splatter or Porno-Gore*" that addressed all the trenchant issues in this matter. I also had in my collection another *Guinea Pig* episode that effectively rendered moot all arguments regarding the veracity of the video. This "*Making of Guinea Pig*" chapter quickly and inarguably exposes "*Flowers of Flesh and Blood*" to be nothing more than an elaborate special effects hoax.

Did anyone else give enough of a flying fuck to research any of these claims? Shit, noooo. The one and only semi-direct emphasis here on "semi" contact I ever had in the aftermath of this dulling debacle was a phone call on my birthday, yet from the RED staffer I had originally sent the tape to, warning me of an impending call from the FBI. Apparently, they were investigating the video as a real "snuff" film. Puh-leeeeeeze! Hey, never got the call. Ever. I lost interest immediately (For the record, I was never a fan of those films and chuckled often as the shitstorm soon lost its momentum. But did it? Ten years after, why do you still care? Now, you know, Bunk).

Walk your dog. Eat more vegetables. Get a hobby.

Here's Blood (and a 14" splinter) in Yer Eyeball.
Chas. Balun
Deep Red World Headquarters

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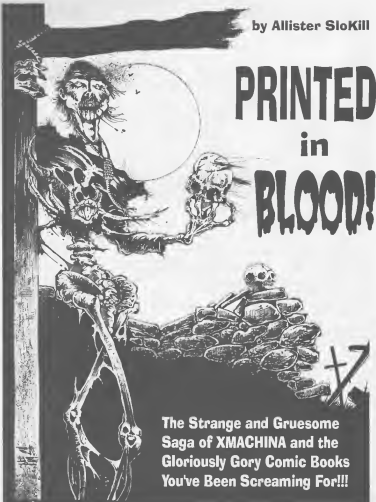
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by Allister SloKill

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**The Strange and Gruesome
Saga of XMACHINA and the
Gloriously Gory Comic Books
You've Been Screaming For!!!**

INSTEAD, I WAS CURSED TO
LIVE WITH THE INSOMNIA
FOR TEN YEARS IF I AGREED.

IN ANOTHER WORLD OF SHADOWS
WE COULD FIND OURSELVES
HAPPINESS AND MORALITY.

HE WASN'T A MAN
TRYING TO INSANE.

IN A MIRROR OF OUR MINDS AND
MORALS AND CONVICTIONS, SHEDDING
THE UNWANTED REMAINS OF
JUSTICE LIKE A CLOUD OF PURE
UNSTOPPABLE MALICE.

ONE LITTLE TOWN
AT THE

RUTHERFORD HALF-HUMAN
EXPERIMENT.

ALien MONSTERS
WAS BORN.

VISIONS OF SPECTRAL
DISCLOSURES WITH THE
POWER TO MARRY
DREAMS.

CHRONICALLY ILL
SUFFERING FROM
BY DEGENERATED HUMAN
BRAIN TISSUE.

GLAD
GENT, HAPPY

THAT WAS
WAS MOST
PEOPLE FIGHTING
IN THE BEGINNING.
I SPENT A LOT OF TIME IN
A MENTAL HOSPITAL BECAUSE
I COULDN'T STOP WANTING TO
KNOW WHAT WAS GOING ON AND I LOVED
ME IN DECLARING WAR
ON THE HASTARDS.

MY VISIONS GOT
UP THE POINT WE
NEEDED.

HE LOADED UP OUR
GUNS AND UP THE
ROAD ON A SEARCH-
AND-DESTROY
MISSION.

HE MADE A LOT OF
FRIENDS AND ENEMIES
ALONG THE WAY.

An evil specter appears in the bright glare of a jeep's headlights. A woman's eyes begin to bleed. Then her lips part open . . . and a floodrush of incoherent brrf come spluttering out. This scene is belov'd by gorehounds the world over as Lucio Fulci's best-ever cinematic setpiece . . . but for the boys at XMACHINA, it's only the beginning of the twisted fun. "We got started with the scene pretty much as you know it," explains writer/manager editor Stephan Romano. "then we hit you really hard with some additional nasty shit that is utterly guaranteed to blow your mind! I write all these notes into the script for Derek, like 'make this bit so exorcistically gratuitous that the reader will feel dirty for buying the fucking comic book!'"

Stephen is talking about the second issue of *Gates Of Hell*, a hugely ambitious comic book miniseries which has been over three years in the making, and is the flagship title of XMACHINA, a brand new multimedia company dedicated to comics, pulp novels and music projects. The company emerged from trying times, when Romano met Derek Rook on their critically acclaimed graphic novel adaptation of Fulci's *Zombie*, which they created along with virtuoso artist Mike Broom. "We all just sorta looked at each other and said, 'man, we gotta start making our own way with this stuff—we're just too goddamned brilliant!'" Rook is the defacto artist on *Gates Of Hell*, and his work speaks for itself—a brilliant mixture of underground and mainstream styles that bring praises from his partner. "I think he's the next Bernie Wrightson, man!"

This August, XMACHINA will debut *Gates Of Hell* at the San Diego comic convention, along with another highly-anticipated comic milestone: *Phantasm*.

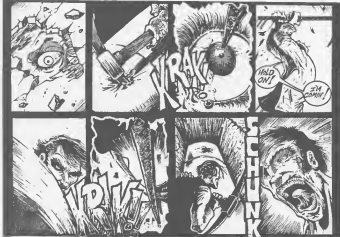
The four-issue limited series picks up the action right where the last film left off, and breaks new ground. Not only does Romano's highly-ambitious storyline rocket the reader into whole new worlds of science fiction and horror, but this is the first comic series in history to be personally supervised and financed by the creator of the franchise. "Don Coscarelli and I became fast

friends when I did a retrospective of the *Phantasm* pictures at the Alamo Drafthouse in Austin, and I pitched my script ideas to him. He really thought it was cool stuff but he had his own input . . . so we looked it around and came up with what you're going to see in the series. We figured the films had gone as far as they could go with the direction they've been going in, so we're looking open a whole new door. It's gonna really knock your lights out."

The two books are being presented in full color, uncensored, with all the action, gore, and foulmouthed heroism you expect from both films. Mike Broom and Noah David Henao teamed up to create the stunningly detailed art for *Phantasm*, with digital colors and special effects by Ricardo Bernadini that Coscarelli calls "breath-taking!"

Also up in August will be the first release from the XMACHINA Pulp series—the first-ever American pressing of the *Phantasm* novelization, a legendary tome written by Coscarelli's late mother Kate, who was also production designer on the film. "The book came out in Japan, where Mike Baldwin was a popular kid actor at the time, but it's never been available here," explains Romano. "What's cool about this book is not only was it written by Don's mom, but it's based on the original screenplay, so you get a rare glimpse of the film as Don originally wrote it, with a whole bunch of scenes that were cut out. Also, we're gonna have some additional text about the making of the film, and some rare production photos and ad mats that have never been published before. It's a must for fans. After this one, we'll be coming out with *Phantasm II: Morrognade*, which will be something of mine based on the early PII drafts. People are going to SHIT when they read some of this stuff!"

"These guys are completely cuckoo," says famed horror comic scribe Stephen R. Bissette, who recently entered into semi-retirement. "But you gotta admire the spirit. XMACHINA takes no prisoners!"





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**MY BEST FRIEND'S WEDDING,
JERRY MCGUIRE, THE LION KING**

10

**STORY OF RICKY, DEAD ALIVE,
DAWN OF THE DEAD**

It ain't rocket science, pard. But hopefully, this dual rating system will tell you what blows and what's moist, meaty and marvelous.



BAISE ME! (2003)
(aka RAPE ME)
D. Corinne Trehl and Virginia Desperles



5

"The only time a whore should open her mouth is when she's giving head," is how the saying goes, and never has that saying been more true than in regards to the makers of this French piece of dogshit. Taking the old rape-revenge stories of *Ms. 45* and *I Spit on Your Grave* and throwing in some cliché hardcore penetration, *Baise Me!* drowns itself in feminist proclamations and peace rhetoric to the point where it just dies right when it begins. A real shame, since we haven't had a good rape-revenge schlocker come out since *Mar Vangoango*. Unfortunately, the piece of shit just doesn't cut the mustard. A few nice shots of gross, but the story of the whole thing is just unbearable. Avoid at all costs.

- David Austin

DUCK! THE CARBINE HIGH MASSACRE (2000)
D. William Halliwell and Jerry Sheck
88 Minutes



6

One of the only recent SOV flicks to actually warrant some attention, *Duck!* is a hard-hitting satire of the Columbine Massacre and the atrocities taken by the world at large. Made by two very talented drug addicts out in New Jersey, this film has more balls than *Insane*. Thank God somebody did it.

While I'm sure the pathetic story of two getty-boy Internet worshippers going psycho in Whitbread Suburbia is probably asclaring by now, *Duck!* has some fun with it and gives it all a good whorl around. The gore is cheap and not all too great, but you gotta give these guys some credit for giving the world at large a hearty Bronx cheer and a swift kick in the balls.

Production values are according to the budget, which was probably nothing. Give these guys some money and maybe a better video camera, and the team of Halliwell/Sheck might do something really special sometime in the future if they don't fall into the trap of making cheap lesbian vampire flicks.

- David Austin

KICHBU! (1996)
(aka LARGE BANQUET OF THE BEASTS)
D. Kazuyoshi Kumakiri
100 Minutes



10

Wildly gory and off-putting at the same time, *Kichbu!* is obviously the product of somebody with talent. The bad Kumakiri doesn't have the guts to do anything else but shock. It's a damn shame, too, because for what it is, the film obviously wasn't made by fucking idiots.

The slender plot concerns a leaved group of campus radicals in '70s Tokyo. When their leader commits suicide, his girlfriend is convinced that the whole thing was a setup by the Fascist Pige and moves the group to the mountains to hide out. However, the group's extreme case of paranoia causes allegations and accusations to be thrown like so many baseballs, and soon enough...we've got Gore City on our hands.

No kidding, some of this shit'll burn the hairs off your nuts and get you pulling like something out of *The Gears of Hell*. Shotgun massacres, decapitations, castrations...this

motherfucker's got it all. The bad there's no fun. While not easy to admire Kichbu! for attempting to recreate the feel of those classic '70's slash flicks, it's harder than a motherfucker to actually put up with for 90 minutes.

- David Austin

KAKASHI (2001)
(aka SCARECROW)
D. Norio Tsuruta



3

Imagine coming home after a night of lifting glasses, and discovering your right to see the world through the bottom of one, to settle down with a Japanese movie that has its sub-ninety minute runtime like an episode of *The Twilight Zone*, then the next sign up ahead reads *Kakashi*.

When the stingingly attractive Keoru raises male audience interest, the movie subsides, in seeking out her recently missing brother, becomes almost irrelevant as she leaves suburbia and enters the isolated village of Kasekita. Arriving during the festival of scarecrows the xenophobic locals are preparing the straw filled Kakashi with more than a burning ambition, as the same man-

nequire delineates the reborn souls of the dead.

As the night of the straw-filled coffin drive near, Eason is hypnotically enveloped into a world of surrealism, where the ghostly presence of the recently deceased traverses the plane of dream and reality from which she may never escape.

The creepy atmosphere that permeates the very pulse of the movie itself is incredible and guaranteed to raise the hair on the back of your neck, delivered like a Vulcan nerve pinch rendered by Rod Taylor stepping out from the shadows behind you dressed as Norman Bates' mother.

With all the influential imagery of modern Japanese horror laced with the long, black-robed female incarnation of evil, interwoven with sublimely balanced moments of quiet punctuated with the resonance of natural sounds, the enveloped viewer is carried along like the preternatural background wind.

The overall experience of such a well-delivered, chilling tale may not appeal to gorehounds seeking out a quick fix, as the intoxication here is in the blood-curdling revelations more akin to the maestro *The Wicker Man* than the blood-letting onslaught of *Dead And Buried*. However, the moment where a young girl comes back to life will leave more than an indelible scar on your psyche, it may just make you *Katana!* your pants. — Paul Cooke

ALL THE COLORS OF THE DARK (1972)

(aka *GAY OF THE MANIC*, aka *THEY'RE COMING TO GET YOU*)

D: Sergio Martino



4

Sergio Martino doesn't waste any time grabbing the viewer's attention in this before-they-even-get-to-the-gore film. Before you even have time to get your seat adjusted on the couch, a very loud and mildly nauseating dream sequence explodes into your television screen. Unfortunately, it disappears just as abruptly as it began and it's the last we see of the dream, several camera angles and multiple images. In fact, most of the violent acts you're seen advertising the film are blown in one big, premature load (so, don't buy into Super Video's false claims of this being "a blood drenched nightmare").

The disturbing dream belongs to the main character who has been characterized to enough traumatic experiences to drive anyone out of their mind. Her hallucinations are a result of a recent car accident in which she lost her unborn child. Plus, her mother was brutally murdered and she's currently being stalked by a sinister looking man in a trench-coat. Needless to say, she's carrying quite a lot of weight on the ol' brain means. In attempt to relieve a bit of stress, she agrees to a cup of tea with an overly friendly neighbor-woman. The neighbor seems politely and then suggests that she free herself from her troubles by participating in a "Sebbet" — in other words, "Hey, go drink a cup of dog's blood with my erotic friends and everything will work out fine." She accepts the invitation, allowing herself to be lured hooked and murdered by a coven of peculiar, middle-aged witches.

Just like any other giallo flick, there are quite a few dialogue-heavy scenes, subplots and mumbo-jumbo that's tossed in just to mislead the audience. However, Martino keeps it flowing with the aid of Bruno Rieder's edited, experimental post score. A hell noz angry with the gore, but stylish enough to be worth your time. — Scott Gabbay

PREMUTOS: THE FALLEN ANGEL (1983)

(aka *LORD OF THE LIVING DEAD*)

D: Olaf Ittenbach



10

Here's a film that is described by the director himself as being stupid, in fact he says words are "more than stupid." If you're comparing it to *Fallin'* or *Beethoven* then OK, however, if you take it for what it is — a straight shot of mindless gore with no cheer, then I think it's hunky! Brilliant! There are some films that aren't meant to be enjoyed, folks, and this is definitely one of 'em. The only reason I've seen it is entirely in German with NO subtitles and the easily holds a spot on my Top 10 Best Films of All Time. It is a non-stop, chaotic bloodbath with crazed corpses, skinned bodies, heads being bitten off, serial choke poking, awkward/schizo sex scenes, strange feedback that don't make any sense and a fat guy with a chainsaw cutting up more living corpses than

you can count! In fact, they even tally it up for you before the credits roll with a much-needed "body count." The story involves "a fallen angel" and a ruthless army of the living dead that eat off limbs, eat guts and bleed all over the place — constantly. Anything beyond that really isn't worth getting into.

Contradictory to Olaf's previous endeavors, the splatter FX in *Premutos* are about average and the movie is actually shot on 16mm film. The easily exceeds typical gore score standards and sits proudly next to Peter Jackson's infamous zombie outing. *Bleinded*. — Scott Gabbay

A BETTER PLACE (1987)

D: Vincent Ponsini

87 Minutes



5

Berret, a shy, withdrawn teenager moves to a different town and high school following the death of his father. He becomes best friends with Ryan, another outcast who the audience knows is up to no good by his obsessive worship of naughty entertainer Jean-Paul Sartre. Ryan feels threatened when Berret begins to make other friends and tries to cast him out of his shell. To cement their friendship, Ryan has an old buffer out in the woods during an evening and enlists Berret to make it look like an accident. Ryan then decides to wipe out a jock asshole, and Berret can't figure moral cowardice any longer. *A Better Place* is a film-fest favorite that may audiences have embraced in spite of its slow pacing and technical flaws. *Place* firmly belongs in the "feral teen" genre, such as *River's Edge*, *Kids*, *Bully*, *Gums* and countless others stretching as far back to 1955's *Blackboard Jungle*. Teenagers, these movies went, with their fragile ages and black-and-white perspectives most definitely pose a threat to the status quo. The sad reality of *Columbine High School* parodied in *Deadly Games* that these films will continue to be made well into the future. — Greg Godefelt

CORPSE CRIMINERS 2 (2000)

D: Ted V. Mikels

102 Minutes



2

Dredging up his old story about unscrupulous businessmen grinding up bodies for gourmet cat food, *Schlockmer-*

ter T. V. Mikels mixes in Allen *Black*, cat people from outer space and ends commentary on the excesses of lesser-fare exploitation for a less innocent eye. Mikels shows his growth as a filmmaker by keeping his camerawork in focus — most of the time, anyway. The only real reason to see this is the participation of cult icon Li Lo (*Disappearing*) Li Lo (*Disappearing*) Li Lo (*Disappearing*). The outrageousness of *Disappearing* and *Li Lo* meet here her perceptive long waits for the dramatic corpse-grinding scene in an act of expert dissection that the project doesn't warrant. Why did I watch this? Why am I writing about it? What are you doing, sitting there and reading about it? — Greg Godefelt

CUT (2000)

D: Kimble Rendell

82 Minutes



8

Scruffy Australian film students reinvent and attempt to finish on it. *Cut* 1989's weaker film with the original star (Molly Ringwald) *Cut* began to pile up and countless unknown household names swirl through the viewer's head. Former teen queen Ringwald stomps through this by-the-numbers affair with ill-disguised disdain. *Scruffy* long years since *Straw* *Cut* (1984), John Hughes' favorite freckle face previously appeared in the even more atrocious horror parody *Office Killer* (1987). At this rate, Ringwald's next role may very well be the sour punch line in a David Lynch film. — Greg Godefelt

DEAD CREATURES (2001)

D: Andrew Parkinson

96 Minutes



8

A group of working-class English girls share a flat that is unrecognizable from dorm rooms on either side of the Atlantic. They spend their time talking about boys, being bored, getting laid and tending to a discomfiting flatmate who has a head to devour human flesh. These leeches share a bond of being infected with a zombie virus and all try to maintain a semblance of a normal lifestyle.

This is the premise of Andrew Parkinson's *Dead Creatures*. It also served as the premise of his *Zombie A Chronicle of Pain* (1998). The twist is a simple one, the walk-

ing dead perform normal household tasks just like human beings, leading up to exciting scenes of characters scrubbing out their bathtub and complaining about their boyfriends. Stories about the zombies and vampires have always enjoyed popularity as they serve as a metaphor for the human condition. Mass mortals may profess to have different religious, political and social beliefs but all have to eat. To this end, Parkerson has his undead characters performing mundane tasks and talking about nothing in particular in between bouts of gore, messy violence.

While the approach at first appears novel, it quickly wears out its welcome. A film about boring people needs to wind up boring the audience. Let's hope Parkerson's next film doesn't feature scores of wewolves filling out sex returns. — Greg Gwydell



AUDITION (1999)
D. Takashi Miike
115 Minutes

If you haven't seen *Audition*, get down this magazine and go get it right now or you'll be sorry. Consider your self warned. Prompted by his growing loneliness and his wife's urgings, a widower hides an aphony casting call for a not-so-legit film in order to seek out the perfect female companion (a great idea, if I do say so myself). Viewing honey after honey, he finally settles on one that's up to par, and after dating for some time our borderline stalker is ready to pop the big question. But hey, what's this? She disappeared! Could something be wrong? Here's a clue, this review's in *Crash Pad* for a reason. Saying any more would

ruin it, so pretend not to read that she's a crazy psychotic bitch with a penchant for torture and mutilation.

Takashi Miike has been amazing one helluva reputation throughout fandom lately, and *Audition* is part of the reason why. A breeding and deliberately paced examination of the fears of being alone, it's a difficult film to sit through. A good porno plays as a sluggish romantic drama, only veering into dementia towards the end, this shit will no doubt stick with you for days after viewing — thanks to the pitch-perfect performance and the expert talent behind the camera. Entertaining, compelling, and repellent at the same time, *Audition* also contains one of the most expertly set-up and realized scare scenes I've ever witnessed — it damn near knocked my girlfriend and I out of our seats! See it at all costs. — Bruce Heischeck

THE COMMONWEALTH (2000)
(aka *LA COMUNICACI*)
D. Alex de la Iglesia
107 Minutes

A down-on-his-luck middle-aged gal, temporarily employed as a real estate agent, decides to stay a few extra nights at a posh pad she's been showing, but her chance with dignity is quickly knocked on its ass by an intrusive water (and other) leak from the apartment above. Upon investigation it's discovered that the man upstairs, an marine cadet, has leaked over and been eating as *Melvin* like for the neighborhood ladies. *Melvin* is a new tenant by the remainder of the community, our dauntless heroine uncovers the fact that the deaf fella was either in a shell-flood of cash, and it doesn't take her long to figure out that she's not alone with this knowledge. And so begins a gleefully brutal of wits (and fists) between the residents of *The Commonwealth*, who were unprepared to go up against someone who has nothing to lose.

Once again, Spanish director *Alex de la Iglesia* proves himself to be a master of black comedy, edgily carving from belly laughs to white-nozzle suspense (in the blink of an eye). While explanation dwells, independent film abilities, and other whiny bitchies may find this flick a bit too slick and glossy for their tastes the more refined aficionados out there will be delighted to discover this

Import has a mile-wide mainstream. As evidenced in his other work, *Iglesias* isn't afraid to bust a few heads or bust a body if he needs to, and there's a few scenes here that'll most likely quicken the pulse of any jonesin' splatter addicts. An all-around class act, *The Commonwealth* did well for itself at the *Goat's* (the equivalent of the Academy Awards), winning statue for Best Actress, Supporting Actor, and Special Effects and grabbing nominations in most of the others. Set off your ass and check this one out. — Bruce Heischeck

THE CONVENT (2000)
D. Mike Mendez
94 Minutes

A stereotypical group of teens decide to wander into the abandoned and cursed tower domain for a night check full of pot, perjury, and puerility, but before you can say, "Wipe of the Demons," one of 'em ends up possessed by Satan's spawn, determined to rip the shit outta the rest of the cast. Following much mayhem, including eye-gouging, fire-roasting, and cerebral concealment, the virginal survivor runs to the only place who can help, a crazy bitch (*Adrienne Barbeau*) who shatgunned the convent's staff years earlier and a good and pruned for Round Two.

Not-to-ovely entering a few pit points from several-guilt pleasures, *The Convent* emerges as a fast-paced and highly enjoyable tongue-in-cheek throwback to the genre films of the 80's. Some morose complain that the tone is too jolly and some of the on-sets feel flat, but those people need a hard kick in the nuts. Easily one of the most fun films of recent years, *DO NOT* miss it. (*Buyas Beware!*) The domestic *Lon's* *Gea DVD*, although exorbitant some cool scores, has suffered violence and gore trims in order to secure an "R" rating. What kind of retarded shit is that? In the day and age, why are home video releases still getting hacked up? — Bruce Heischeck

THE CHIER (1999)
(aka *DOMENESS*)
D. Glynis Beard
90 Minutes

Obsessive limbo felle strikes a deal with a hag in bed

old-age make-up to get a flask of magic perfume that'll make his ex-girl want to roll around in the sack for all eternity. To celebrate, he invites all of her friends to his out-of-the-way cottage for a weekend of gleeing. Much to their chagrin, a demon of Latino legend makes an appearance in the last third to rip off heads and yank still-beating hearts in playback for unsoftened use of her *Fandish* fragrance.

Based in plot on the South-of-the-Boarder tale of "La Llorona" (translation for the 80's *Melvin* is *Devil* Curse of the Crying Woman) and styled after *Hong Kong* fantasy effects like *A Chinese Ghost Story*, *The Chier* was unfortunately overlooked when released, probably since it was neither a wretched iso-vamp flickfest or an uninspired gore bore. A shame too, since it excels in many areas where most independent flicks fall flat, including a relatively original and unusual source of inspiration, several bits of gung-ho camera work, decent acting, and plenty of scenic photography (indy chumps learn: location scouting works wonders, don't just shoot in your damn backyard or your parent's basement). Pacing could have been improved though, as the *Chier* isn't exactly *thriller* enough to spend an hour with before anyone gets shrooded. These demerits aside, *The Chier* is well worth keeping an eye out for. — Bruce Heischeck

DARKNESS (1993)
D. Lail Jenter
98 Minutes

Upon returning home from a concert, several teens learn their entire neighborhood has been exterminated by a pro-man's Prince of Darkness. Joining forces with a past survivor who has been tracking the nemesis bloodsucker, our *stalker's* *stalker's* do their best to slaughter every single member of their community as the townfolk return from the dead with a thirst for the Red. Far removed from tedious, pseudo-cool, goth vamps, these *teenies* act like adults who'll rip ya' to shreds in order to get a fix, and the world is a better place because of it.

Fans of True Grit, look no further, as *Darkness* is a splendiferous good time, filled to bursting with 10-foot animal sprays, chain-sawed limbs, and a climatic meltdown orgy of as-

A SMALL SAVINGS...
A SMALL SAMPLING:

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Cafe Flesh (79)
Chill Factor, The (A Cold Night's Death) 73
Creatures of Evil
Gracula Blows His Cool (72)
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Kauers Memory (70)
Horror of the Zombies (74)
In the Year 2088 (65)
Island of the Burning Doomed (67)
Junkie zombies
Ms Biffette (65)
Mysterians, The (58)
Mysterious Island of Captain Nemo
Morris Tepees, The (73)
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plodin' noggin' that'll have any worthwhile film fan cheerin' themselves hoarse. Short with no budget on Super8 over a several year duration, *Fast-time ringleader* Jonker proves he's no pussy, and never once cops out or pulls punches. Let's hope he gets another pic off the ground soon, we need him NOW! Flopped by a 4.5-kil rating by some amateurish performances and slight pacing problems, rumors abound that these films will be fixed on an upcoming Super Special Edition Director's Cut DVD! Hallelu-fuckin'-jah! - Bruce Haischack

DEMONIUM (2001)

D: Andreas Schnaas

85 Minutes



After a confusing and convoluted opening, it turns out that *Demonium* is nothing more than a threshold updating of Andy Milligan's *The Cheapies* (a shambles flick itself), as a group of annoying schoolkids are assembled in a remote castle for the reading of a quick Doctor's will, only to be dismantled by a greasy Kewt and his shrunkeners maid. Some effort is made to flesh out the story a bit with pseudo-medical babble about a miracle cure-all and shot-on-video flashbacks detailing the less Dr.'s life, but who gives a flying fuck? Just hurry up and get to the ritzzy-grit!

As witnessed by his *Violent Shit* trilogy, German gore specialist Schnaas has continuously impressed as a director, and *Demonium* is his best effort yet. Shot on film and actually showing some semblance of style, it's always nice to look at while waiting for another graphic decapitation or disembowelment, of which there's plenty (Andreas hasn't mellowed, but goddamn, man! This ain't MTV, it's a go to show an effect for the longer than half-second before cutting to another angle). In a play for marketability, *Demonium* was filmed in English, which would normally be a good thing, but next time how about choosing actors who regularly speak the language! Performances and up being a nauseous mixture of shock accents and high school dramatic theatrics, more likely to induce laughter than interest. Oh well, perhaps with his next film, *Wise the Anguilar* (gets love that title), Schnaas will finally hit a home-run. - Bruce Haischack

JUNK (1999)

D: Atsushi Muraishi

83 Minutes



Take several classic zombie tales, add some crime film, put them all in a blender and eat to mix. What do you come up with? Why *Junk* of course, an amusing entry into the Japanese zombie genre that contains enough gore, guts, and gore to please the indecent-minded undead fans. A group of criminals rob a jewelry store and head to their rendezvous, an old abandoned military warehouse. Bed time seems as the place once housed top secret experiments involving the recently deceased and is still stockpiled with re-animated fluid and corpses. Naturally, said reagent and bodies mix, resulting in a small army of the living dead led by a noble and masked Japanese chick. Serviceable in both terms of production and performance, *Junk* is an ode to the zombie film of yore, while presenting a surprisingly contemporary one. While the mixing of yakuza and living dead doesn't match the far superior *Virus*, the results here are amusing. Gore is spotty with combat ripping off huge chunks of flesh and bullet hits resulting in some of the best small blood spray since the *Love Wolf* series. Fans of this type of "blender craze" should also check out *Murage's Slave*, a film that does for the gangster genre what *Junk* does for the zombie one. - Will Wilson

MEAT MARKET 2 (2001)

D: Brian Clement

80 Minutes



Meat Market 2 is gross! How gross? So gross that even this paleo vore head to turn it off for a breather. Then again, how is one supposed to react to a guy full-on fucking a freshly plucked pile of goaty Intestine Organi? Higher praise could not be given.

The film begins one year after a zombie plague outbreak and follows a group of three survivors who reluctantly become members of a survival cult led by a former motivational speaker. The group of fanatics live in a self-sustained underground facility, harboring dark ideas of using the zombie plague to build a master race. Think *Ramona's Day of the Dead* crossed with

Main Ramp? Shot for roughly \$2000 in Canada, *Meat Market 2* is a go for broke, low-budget zombie epic. For a shot-on-video production, the film is very ambitious in terms of both content and style. The script, although sometimes uneven due to some odd humor, has a focus. And while a few performances may be a bit stilted, the film delivers the appropriate sanguinary scenes. Director Clement pulls off some stunning technical stuff with his budget too, incorporating well-executed explosion and shoot-outs. Clement is obviously a fan of zombie films and fills his work with combed-out references accordingly. But he isn't afraid to mix things up a bit, throwing in vampires, pillow fights (L), cannibals and even a masked Mexican wrestler (while not for all tastes, *Meat Market 2* is a real come addition to the zombie genre. For more information, check out <http://vbschool.net/~frontline/>. - Will Wilson



FORESTS OF THE DEAD (2001)

D: Brian Singleton

79 Minutes



Shot-on-video horror flicks run the gamut from mildly entertaining to the downright unwatchable, with a majority of the offerings falling into the latter category. Thankfully, the low budget production from up north beats the odds delivering a film that never takes itself too seriously as it piles on the gore and laughs in equal measure.

The film's plot is kept to a minimum. Two groups of friends head up to the woods and get killed. Nothing more, nothing less. Its exposition is provided as to why the woods are crawling with the undead, they just are. Where the film truly succeeds is in its execution. Director/Writer/Editor/PK

man Brian Singleton keeps things moving at a fast pace. His script goes to the extreme quick and is filled with an over-the-top sense of humor, which the actors are more than game to bring to life. Particularly impressive as Mark Singleton and Kevin Brooks as a pair of overly patriotic French-Canadian lovebirds. And while the film's first half concentrates on laughs, the second part piles on the gore. Heads are popped off and limbs hacked with abandon as a lone female survivor tries to make her way through the forest. The shift in tone may astute some viewers, but anyone who loves *Tremor's* brain-damaged hybrids will set up *Forests of the Dead*. Singleton displays a firm knowledge of atmospheric horror, beautifully capturing the dark woods at night in all their gloom covered glory. Also, his use of some stunning locations, with the abandoned house featured in the film's end being truly creepy. With its macabre humor and genuine feelings of grief, *Forests of the Dead* is really the most enjoyable shot-on-video movie since *Rebirth of the Living Dead*. For more information, visit www.OneDayInAForest.com. - Will Wilson

CHILDREN OF THE LIVING DEAD (2001)

D: Tim Ramey

90 Minutes



As if meeting footage into the original *Night of the Living Dead* was not deplorable enough, now John Russo gives us a sequel to his beloved Anniversary Edition. Displaying all the life of a rotting corpse, this film is about as classy as digging up one of your dead relatives and churning money to see them. This story involves some sort of bullet shot a serial killer gun super zombie, Abbott Hayes. Whatever. This film truly and completely sucks from beginning to end. However, the photography is really nice, but having that as consolation for acting through this crap is like having someone ask if you want a clean or rusty nail shoved into your eye. Give us *Revenge of the Living Dead* any day!

Will Wilson

CROCODILE (2000)

D: Todd Hooper

83 Minutes



The degree to which Todd Hooper continues to mar

His early cinematic legacy is stark: His once imposing island reputation suffers another deadly blow with the stiff, an as-by-the-bynders film as one can get. A boatload of teens sail down the river getting in all the drinking, partying, and requisite teenage drama ("You also with my boyfriend?") before a killer crocodile, costed that some yokes mess with her eggs, comes a chomper! Said unempathetic dorks spend the rest of the film fighting for their pathetic lives. Hooper adding this to his filmography as the unveiling a cryon drawing after you've already panned the Mona Lisa. The same guy made this and *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*? Or even *From Alive*, Hooper's far superior take on the "killer crocodile" sub-genre? Watching this mundane and play-it-safe horror was would never lead one to believe it was made by the guy who crafted one of the most intense viewing experiences ever. Then again, arguing that Hooper has lost it is a rather redundant point. We all know he has. It is just how far he has plummeted that is shocking.

- Will Wilson

DAGON (2001)

O Stuart Gordon

85 Minutes



6

"We all knew we just couldn't do it right for \$4 million."
- Stuart Gordon on *Shadow over Innsmouth*
Fangoria #31

Well, so much for sticking to your guns! Poor Stuart Gordon. While studios are dishing out over \$50 million just to make run-of-the-mill slasher films, Gordon toils with slump change to bring his dream project *Shadow over Innsmouth* to the screen under the guise of an adaptation of the very short H.P. Lovecraft story "Dagon." And while the film is moderately successful in its intent, it can only leave one to wonder (once again) about what could have been.

The story focuses on the young couple of Paul and Barbara. Celebrating their recently acquired wealth, the duo charter a yacht and, along with another couple, set off the coast of Boston. After a freak storm crashes the boat into nearby rocks, Paul and Barbara take a raft to the nearby village looking for help. However, once they reach the village of Innsmouth, weird things start happening. The local priest spots

webbed fingers and the concierge at the hotel has gills. Even worse, the squaring female tele to chasing our heroes. It is during this extended chase that our duo perceives things are not as they appear and slowly unveil the town's secret past.

Much like Gordon's 1989 horror entry *Candle Fear*, *Dagon* relies heavily on atmosphere and receives substantial support from the European locales. Filmed entirely on location in Spain, the film sweeps streets and compact alleyways at night are genuinely creepy, effectively shot by Carlos Suarez. And while Gordon piles on the thick atmosphere, the film lacks the necessary character development to ensure an emotional reaction, resulting in a film that is essentially just one long extended chase. Dennis Pacific's cast reference both Lovecraft tropes but fails to strike an emotional chord within either, especially when the lead character is changed to a winner, worthy computer geek. And this is the film's biggest problem. As the protagonist, Eric Gooden is so homely and weedy that one can't help but wonder how he got past the initial casting session. Clearly the role would have been better suited to Gordon regular (and fan favorite) Jeffrey Combs. In fact, the filmmakers make an obvious effort to convey Combs' likeness unto Gooden, to minimal effect.

Fans expecting another *Re-Animator* will have to keep on holding their breath. Missing from Gordon's earlier outings are the black humor and the gore. Outside of the nearest skinning scene *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2*, *Dagon* is pretty light in the splatter department, relying more on creature that look like extras straight out of Jabba the Hutt's palace. Gordon showcases his talents in fictional form rather than full on. Now whether or not this is an aesthetic or budgetary choice is debatable, but given that the film was produced under the banner of Brian Yusef's *Fantasies Factory*, my money is on the latter. What a shame.

- Will Wilson

DEAD & ROTTING (2002)

D David P. Barton

72 Minutes



6

After massing with the son of a local witch, three sadacks incur the vengeance of

the old hag. Disguising herself as a voluptuous seductress, the witch, how shall I put it gently, gets the men's seed and seeds these zombies in order to seek revenge. One by one, she captures the men and turns them into her own personal dead and rotting slaves.

This low budget co-production from Full Moon/ Tampa starts out promising but eventually collapses thanks to its narrative turgidity. On the plus side, the film features an intriguing premise, although somewhat derivative of backwoods fest *Pumpkinhead*. The performances are also good all-around. Brent Hodge and Debbie Rochon both go good in the *Troma* film! Expand their dramatic wings a bit, but the real standout is Tim Hoover as J.B. It is rare to see such a relaxed and natural performance in a low-budget film filled with overly self-conscious thespians. Director Barton presents a good view of a world steeped in industry mysticism and gets the most out of his rustic settings. On the down side, the film features during its last third, inserting a plot device that is completely contrived and distracting. Also, the video photography is grainy and dark at times. Had more attention been given to these details, the film would have been much stronger. As it stands, *Dead & Rotting* is just sort of being strange.

- Will Wilson

STACY (2001)

D Nanami Tomomatsu

80 Minutes



10

How can you go wrong with a movie packed full of Japanese schoolgirls, zombies, and gore geeks? Throughout the world death has come to all girls aged 16 to 17, but fate has dealt us all a lucky hand by bringing back these hot little corpses as zombies. Unfortunately for their loved ones, these blossoming babes have returned with a strange appetite for human flesh and no one is safe from their cannibalistic cravings. In an effort to curb the madness, the government has formed squads of *Flower Repeat Killers* to deal with the dead, while television ad bars are heck the latest! In home protection, the Bruce Campbell *Fight Island 2*. Stacy is an on-the-money, perfect mix of black comedy and horror, drenched in buckets of blood. Bowers sweat all who prey upon Stacy.

- John Whetman

BATTLE ROYALE (2000)

O King Hu

114 Minutes



10

Tom Wright from today's headlines and excreted with a sick sense of reality has only the Japs can do it comes the highly controversial and though-provoking film, *Battle Royale*. Unfortunately for most reviewers, the sensitive subject matter has kept it from our shores, but this film must be recognized, subverted, and even profane these in these blood-drenched pages.

It's the dawn of the new era. Well, not really, because the youth of today will always seem fucked-up to the generation that came before them, but for fantasy's sake the government has just signed into law the *Battle Royale* act in hopes of combating the rise in juvenile violence. To add injury to insult, they have selected 100 amusement parkgoers (only a class of 8th graders for a deserted island death battle. Here, each student is given a weapon, which can range from an Uzi to a pot lid, but all will war in love and war, or so the naive may think. Soon, some of these meacrats even begin to enjoy the taste of blood as their sadistic side shines through. Arrows through the neck, a switchblade to the balls, a stun gun, knives, suicide, and a gas gun, you name it - kids die that way! But fear and genocide will prove to be the greatest force of destruction in this winner-take-all survival-of-the-fittest splatterfest. *Battle Royale* and so does being a loser in the game of death.

Battle Royale is easily one of the best and most violent films to come out in years. It's brutality-with-a-message approach, although not original, delivers on all cylinders while leading the ground down a path of blood-soaked enlightenment. Is it social commentary for what averts us all? Hopefully!

- John Whetman



ESCAPE 2000 (1991)
(aka BLOOD CAMP THATCHER, aka TURKEY SHOOT)
 D: Brian Trenchard-Smith
 93 Minutes



A political activist (Steve Rackaback - Charlie Manson himself), a prize bystander (Dina Murray), and several other social outcasts are thrown into a futuristic labor camp to pay for the error of their ways. Before long, a Most Dangerous Game styled hunt commences, as the warden and several of his upper-class pals throw the newbies into the surrounding woods and track 'em down - one even uses a warrent on a bulldozer who runs off and eats said them! Fortunately for us, tables turn and multiple deranged, gun-blinded desperados, and brawlers quickly enact as the cast starts being into each other.

Proving it's possible to make a raucous and gory action film in Australia that's NOT part of the *Mel'Alas* series, *Escape 2000* should be considered essential viewing for exploitation buffs. Not particularly original by any means of the word, the film manages to pack in about as many cheap thrills as the concept allows, and anyone looking for a briskly paced good time with plenty of blood and shot blowin' up should be able to find it here. The old U.S. Embassy Video tapes are out to hell, and apparently even my bootleg is still missing some footage, but word has it *Anchor Bay* is in the process of restoring the film to it's full glory for a DVD release. It's about time! -Bruce Holtschack

FLESH EATERS (2001)
 D: Christie Applegate and Shane M. Dallman
 83 Minutes



When their boat engine fails, a pair of travelers and their studly skipper are forced to swim ashore on almost deserted island, run over by the marlinheads to be a spot of freshly-dearly happenings before long they encounter a wacky professor conducting research from a makeshift lab, and it turns out the water surrounding the turf is infested with carnivorous crustaceans that have no qualms with bite' holes in your ass and taking off with a few fingers - these little beetles don't disappoint! Does the professor have anything to do

with it? Duh! Have you even watched TV before?

Inspired by the 1964 B-movie of the same name, this reinterpretation manages to ring true to the spirit of the original, while adding enough beads and blood to please today's fans - not an easy task! Hopefully some legit distributor will see past the stigma associated with a black-and-white shot-on-video film and ensure *Flesh Eaters* sees a wider release, as it's put together with a great deal more care and intelligence than 50% of the faces dustbin' up store shelves nowadays. The lead actors are all surprisingly good for an independent effort, and the skill behind the camera benefits greatly from the directing duo's knowledge of what works and what doesn't (director Dallman is a Deep Red vet, so it HAS to be good, no?). Plus, it's always notable when someone creates a good of Creature Features instead of some flat-out jerk-off crap poorly masquerading as cinema. Granted, some of the secondary performances are slightly weak, and there are a few cheesy optical effects to deal with, but overall *Flesh Eaters* is an impressive debut from the fellows at Labcoat Productions, let's say they have more up their sleeves. For more info, check out www.LabcoatOnline.com - Bruce Holtschack

HYPOCRISIS (1998)
(aka THE HYPOCRIST)
 D: Maseyuki Ochiai
 110 Minutes



Following a rash of nasty, unexplained suicides, a detective and a psychologist, whose only clue is the phrase, "green monkey," mumbled by the victims before their demise, do their damndest to discover who or what is causing these grotesque and highly watchable events. Stumbling upon a psycho schizo mystic' the same thing on a local hypnosis show for something, our sleuths find that a parvo mind-controller is on the prowl, playing suggestion in people's minds, compelling them to off themselves in a myriad of violent ways. My kind guy.

Hypnosis seems some self-included splotter sequences which will definitely make any reader of this 'one art up and take notice, my fave being the track star wannabe who kicks into overdrive 'til her bones burst through her legs,

and the pinch-hitter slugging' grand-slam with his face. Regardless, a big misstep into supernatural territory demits this one near the end, but up until then it's one helluva ride. Per superior hypnosis from the writer recommends the Japanese film *Cure*. - Bruce Holtschack

A NIGHT TO DISMEMBER (1983)
 D: Doris Wishman



After being released from a nuthouse, a woman's family tries to drive her insane. Meanwhile, other people get chopped to pieces. I think: Maybe. To be honest I've watched this mess a half dozen times and I still don't know what the fuck it's about. A wacko-over narrator tries to clear things up, but his non-stop ramblings usually don't make any damn sense either. Scenes are repeated, music blares continuously, and no one ever does anything that resembles logic. The result is an exercise in farce that more would call 'despite, you just need to see it to understand. Do you can punch yourself in the face, you'll feel the same way afterwards. Options can swing either way, I absolutely love it, but I can also understand folks who simply despise it as an incomprehensible piece of dung. - Bruce Holtschack

THE RECORD (2000)
 D: Gi-hun Kim and Jung-sook Kim
 84 Minutes



A pair of exxy high school bitches Invites Mass Man (nicknamed as because of facial gear he wears to elude severe allergies) to a secluded cabin for a weekend of... I dunno, what do nerdy, allergy-riddled kids do? Sit on the couch and dodge pollen? Anyway, while on their gateway the trio is accosted by a group of thugs who are conspiring their home invasion for future use, before letting it be known that it's all just a not-very-elaborate joke. But guess what? Due to a convoluted series of mishaps they repeatedly stab Meek Men, at him on fire, and watch him jump off a cliff. A year later, the zombie wind up being stabbed and slashed by an unknown assailant. Could it be the slut nurse? The psycho sis? The stressed-out teacher? Meek Men himself? Do you give a

shit? Influenced by the slasher resurgence of the late 80's, *The Record* is pretty much a Korean *I Know What You Did Last Summer*, 'cuz with slightly bigger balls and slightly hotter chicks (I've got a bet for *Asian* girls, though to be fair I wouldn't mind throwin' my dink in Buffy either). Unfortunately, much like it's damper counterpart, *The Record* forgets to lead on the massive gun which made the early 80's teen-sit wave so much fun. Sometimes a spunkin' neck stomp goes a long fuckin' way, and would a bare not be too much to ask for? Not an original bore in it's body, but it IS not as safe a slasher flick that's not self-referential to the point of insult to true fans. - Bruce Holtschack

THRILLER: A CRUEL PICTURE (1974)
(aka THEY CALL HER DINE EYE)
 D: Bo Arne Vibenius
 104 Minutes



Left mute after being raped by her uncle at a young age, Madeira (Swedish symphony Christina Lindberg) is an attract ve get with a big ol' 70's Euro-Slash who gets dragged up, hooked on smack, and pushed into prostitution by the local pimp-deity, where an early escape attempt results in a close-up eyeball gouging greater than anything *Fuko* ever accomplished. Tired of gettin' her ass kicked and having cocks rammed in various holes, Madeira decides to take her whoredom and get trained in stunt-car driving, firearms training, and hand-to-hand combat. In no time flat she's a master blaster on a revenge-fueled rampage, decimating every motherfucker who ever scorned her, all in glorious, over-the-top, almighty!

Slow to get started, *Thriller* nevertheless becomes a draw-in fer's dream come true - a violent, bloody, and fascinating variation on revenge themes familiar to followers of chop-socky epics, samurai peccies, and spaghetti westerns by the end of the film you'll be on your feet rootin' for the slutty Swede assassin, I guarantee it. Companions to later rape peccaries are inevitable (especially Mr. 45), but *Thriller* is of a different breed, and should be sought out by exploitation devotees with a taste for the offbeat. Hard to get for a long, long time, an uncut U.S.



DOG SOLDIERS (2002) *dir/ur* Neil Marshall *prod* Christopher Figg *Tom Reeve David E. Allen* *starring* Sean Pertwee Kevin McKidd Liam Cunningham *special makeup effects* Image FX *music by* Mark Thomas *102 m*

Energetic, blood-and-flesh spattered actioner fuses *The Howling* with *Straw Dogs* and stands with the Canadian *Ginger Snaps* as a jolting infusion in New Millennium werewolf flix; offering abundant grue, rousing action, and an engaging script and cast. In the remote highlands of Scotland, a small battalion of grunts armed with blanks for routine wargame maneuvers find themselves in ever-deepening shit as they stumble upon a Special Ops squad that's just been decimated by a pack of unseen creatures. As the feral predators tear into their meager ranks, the grunts luck into the company of a female zoologist (Emma Cleasby) who jeeps them to the relative safety of an abandoned backwoods home, where the siege continues through the night to its bloody conclusion. This lively UK/Luxembourg coproduction is a corker; boasting bracing mayhem, gutspilling, literal rivers of gore, believable berserker hand-to-hand combat with lycanthropes in close

REVIEW by Stephen R. Bissette

quarters, and a nasty twist or two in the tail. Solid cast includes *Transpotting's* Kevin McKidd as the likeable hero and Sean Pertwee as a tough-as-nails sarge who keeps on fighting even after his intestines have been crazy-glued back into place. Image FX and Bob Keen provide some fucking cool werewolves (adhering to the lean, lanky toothy Berni Wrightson/Rob Bottin archetype), and writer/director/editor Neil Marshall struts his stuff with nonsense style. (P.S. There's even a vital role for an abandoned family dog, which makes this even dearer to our beloved REDitor's black little heart.)



Steve Bissette retired from comics in 1999, and now co-manages First Run Video in Brattleboro, VT, which just won the national VSDA Award for Outstanding Independent Video Store of 2002. He painted the bloody cover art for the Barel Entertainment DVD release of the restored *Last House on Dead End Street* and scribed the liner notes for the Synapse DVD release of *Radley Metzger's The Image*. Bissette continues to illustrate at least one major book project per year and is putting the final touches on his book on Vermont films and filmmakers for University Press of New England.

website <http://www.comicon.com/bissette> or
<http://www.fanboy.info/yabbse/index.php?board=13>

DVD is finally in the works from Synapse Films and Chrono Entertainment.
• Bruce Heichler

FRALTY (2004)

D: Bill Paxton
100 Minutes



2

Frality is the tale of a single parent (Bill Paxton) who is visited by an angel who tells him his job is to rid the world of demons. He assists the aid of his two young sons, as the angel instructs, and goes on his way doing God's dirty work. Oh, the demons appear as everyday people, but when God lays his hands on the people, they are exposed for what they are, sinning souls!

The eldest son isn't too sure God is all that with it, he feels his Dad has gone plum insane. His hal? This is one of the issues of the film, obviously.

Told in one giant flashback by the eldest son, played in later years by Matthew McConaughey to FBI agent Powers Boone. In this form we are given the set-up for the "unseen" that this film has in store for us. Are they effective? They were for me. I figured out what was going on at about the same time the people on the screen did. I just didn't try and figure out hints anymore, they're more fun that way.

One of the main things I loved about the film is the fact that in the end, the film stands up and grabs hold of its Horror film roots and releases them proudly to the sky. In my eyes, if it wasn't for the ending, this film could call itself a Thriller or Mystery, or hide behind any fancy name the studios would want to give it. With the ending going the way it does, well, this is a HORROR film, make no bones about it!

The film has solid acting, a pretty solid script, some great atmosphere and cinematography, and an ending that could only be Horror! How can you really go wrong?
• Carl Leichter

THE HOUSE WITH WINDOWS THAT LAUGH (1978) (aka LA CASA DALLE FINESTRE CHE RIDONO)

D: Pupi Avati
110 Minutes



6

La Casa delle Finestre che Ridono tells the tale of a man, Stefano (played by Lino

Capoliccio), hired to a small village to repair a broken up fresco of a man being tortured to death. This marked hole picture hangs in the church, by the way.

There in the village he runs into an old friend who tries to warn him of strange things that have happened and that he knows of. One thing leads to another and for a season I won't mention it (try and figure it out), his friend never gets the stories to him. But with this short message, strange things start to reveal themselves to our man Stefano.

The story unravels throughout the whole film and never has a moment where it is not giving you new info. Though some people have found the film slow moving, that is one of it's beauties, it moves at a deliberate pace, giving you just the info you need, and it gets better with repeated viewing!

This DVD is a beautiful thing to see, and knowing the history of the film and that fact that it was almost lost due to director Avati just not being to take care of his stuff (you just know his Mom gave him hell growing up), this is probably the best that the film will ever look, almost free of grain, though a little soft at times, but still a brilliant piece!

The disc comes with two extra behind-the-scenes featurettes, both of which are in Italian so I have no idea what the track is being said. The film itself is sub-titled into English and also contains Italian subs. The soundtracks consist of Italian mono mix and an Italian S.I. mix, both being very clear and strong. The whole package is just wonderful.
• Carl Leichter

JESUS CHRIST VAMPIRE HUNTER (2001)

D: Lee Gordon Demerise
80 Minutes



8

Move over, Buffy! Seymore, Wade! You're old news, Van Helsing! There is a new hero in town that has come to deal with the homoglobin challenged and he really looks like for the Lord. Fresh from the creative team that brought us the extremely funny and highly entertaining short, *Mary Kruticles* and the *Treasure of the Aztec Mummy*, comes the ultimate in messianic saviors: Jesus Christ Vampire Hunter.

"Where have all of

our lesbians gone?" Bluffed by a rash of satanic killings, the local clergy decide to ask the help of the Lord, but rather than using prayer they decide to ask him directly. It seems Jesus! Second Coming he led him to settling down in the great white north while he waits for apocalypse. As he is there into duty against the forces of evil, he realizes that he indeed has the ability to walk around during the day. Damn it, he and the ability to tan, sign his up! Unconcerned to life in the big city and hoping to better blind it with his new surroundings, he is given a fashion makeover by the very sexy Mary Magnum who later succumbs to her own unnatural urges. Now alone and on the verge of defeat, JC must call on his old friend, the Saint like masked Manzan wrestling superstar El Senzot, to be his tag team partner in the battle. Headlocks, dislocks, and karate chops abound as they search for who and what is behind this diabolic harvesting.

When Hollywood has all but bastardized kung fu cinema by making it serious, trendy, and, dare I say, much sought after by god even Bruce Lee is turning over in his grave by *Manzan* monogamy, a film like *Jesus Christ Vampire Hunter* is a snapping tribute to the classic films of the 70's mixed in with the splatter of Herschel Gordon Lewis.
• John Wheatman

LEGION OF THE DEAD (2000)

D: Olaf Ittenbach
88 Minutes



8

Spl called in dead blood from a recent viewing of *Predators*, I had high expectations for splatter-lung Olaf Ittenbach's recent big-budget film *Legion of the Dead*. Unfortunately, bigger doesn't always equate to better, even for us gorehounds.

Storied from a mix of *The Prophecy* and *From Dusk till Dawn*, *Legion* tells the story of sisters William and Luke as they come upon a small desert town recently ravaged by a string of ritualistic killings. Unbeknownst to the townsfolk, this all plays into the hands of a mysterious tall blond man and he master plan to reanimate recruits for the titular squadrons. Later, the boys meet up with the sexy Gaara, a waitress at the local watering hole, who seems to be hiding a dark, dirty secret that we hope she won't keep, just so this movie will



feeling and! All these shenanigans lead to a little showdown of spoonbats proportions (and one of the few redeeming points of the film), when blonde comes to claim what is rightfully his.

Shot on 35mm and more polished than his previous endeavors, *Legion* still falls on several levels, most evidently bad dialogue and a lack of gore. Ittenbach, who also wrote the story (and assumedly the banner that serves as dialog between these one-dimensional characters), really needs to get a better grasp on his Americana: Hay Day, one suggestion—keep making your films in German and let those crazy subtitles re-write your crappy dialogue! The film is also missing much of the trademark blood and guts that has made Ittenbach famous. Now, don't get me wrong, there was some great splatter and no one lother than our good pal Tom Savini! does the shotgun-to-the-stomach-cortex better than Olaf, but come on! Let the blood flow a little more freely! All in all, *Legion of the Dead* is a below-average film that leaves you wondering if the brains splattered throughout weren't Olaf's own.

• John Wheatman

"Legion of the Dead is a below-average film that leaves you wondering if the brains splattered throughout weren't Olaf's own."

CRADLE OF FEAR (2001)**D. Alex Chandon**

115 Minutes



A low-budget film shot on digital by the "director" of *Bad Karma*—starting the singer of some UK Death Metal band? Getta sick, right? But despite it's budgetary limitations this holds the attention well and delivers both visual style and excessive gore.

The film houses four stories, linked by an encompassing plot concerning detective Neilson's (Edmund Doherty) attempts to make sense of several brutal murders on his patch. He begins to realize that a former inmate of his, the psychotic Kemper (David McFadden), is sitting in his peddler cell ordering the murders of the people who put him there.

Dave Firth (voiced with CRADLE OF FEAR) is "The Man" — Kemper's servant. His task is to serve supernatural desires to those who sentenced, testified against, and locked Kemper up.

And so the short stories introduce us to the victims. Bloody pregnancies, seniors' fantasies, broken glass in eyes, vomit, intense snuff scenes and brutally gory limb feelings ensue, in a fast-paced anthology that rivals *Nightmare Concert* in the splatter stakes.

The instantly effective splatter is provided by Creature FX, the team who worked on *Halloween* and *Black Newt Down*. The wrap-up is gory but a tad unsatisfying (having said that, there's a great head-exploding scene that better than the one from *The Beyond*'s climax). The humorous dialogue may have been ill-received, and acting isn't high on the film's list of priorities. Overall though, *Cradle of Fear* delivers the gory goods in spades.

This one is bound to divide audiences. But those who can see past the above thrills—like I did! Its Digital origin will agree that *Cradle of Fear* is the best UK horror film in over 15 years. Honest! It's unapologetic, unbearably gory, and never dull. Currently available uncut on UK DVD.

— Stuart White

STAND ALONE (1999)**D. Geppie Nye**

93 Minutes



Winner of several European film festival awards, Nye's feature debut is an equal parts gripping, amusing and -

without doubt - one of the most uniquely disturbing accounts of one man's descent into madness ever committed to celluloid. *Taxi Driver* is lame in comparison.

It's the 80s. An unemployed butcher relocates to Paris with his pregnant girlfriend, in the hope of finding work. When things don't go to plan, the butcher re-evaluates his life and decides it's time to make a few changes - his first course of action is to punish his unborn baby to death while it resides in it's screaming mother's belly ...

What follows is an intensely disturbing (and twofoldingly plausible) journey into the mental breakdown of an already violent character as he shuns the life he recently adopted and goes in search of his institutionalized daughter. Along the way, we are treated to a constant barrage of abusive, misanthropic voice-over monologues by the butcher - so much so that slow readers may soon give up on this subtitled feature. But don't!

For those that stay the distance, you'll be met with a truly remarkable essay in suburban madness, and will no doubt find yourselves worrying over being able to identify with this reprehensible character on occasion - such is the quality of the script.

Well shot, superbly acted and intelligently scripted - this is a masterpiece. The fact that it reveals in a grim tone and an unmitigatedly mordant black humor is a huge bonus. The abortion scene is tough, but there's an even cruder scene to come - a prolonged sequence of blood spurting from a young girl's throat that will leave you gagging. No plot spoilers here - just watch it! You won't be disappointed, although the end may need a couple of viewings to sink in!

Intelligent, disturbing and truly harrowing. This film demands to be seen - it is one of the best HRROR films of the 90s (with many a horror conversion in sight...) A modern classic.

— Stuart White

ANTHROPOMORPHICUS 2000

(1996)

(aka CARNIVAL 2000)**D. Andreas Schnaase**

99 Minutes



WHAT?!! A remake of Joe D'Amato's 1980 Italian film? Yup, you said it right,

senior! Remember himself a low-budget Gus Van Sant, director Schnaase has crafted a virtual shot-by-shot "re-imagining" of the splatter favorite, differing only in occasion to use the gore arts (not a bad thing by any means). It's the same places, just new faces as a group of tourists head for a vacation on a remote island where they encounter the titular carnival, played by Schnaase himself. While still shot-on-video, the film is a considerable improvement over Schnaase's earlier output (*Violent Sins*). Overall production values are good with strong lighting and camerawork. Acting is pretty much what you would expect, but the level of gore more than makes up for it. The film overflows with fluids as heads, faces, and fetuses all fall victim to the "Lambical killer" in amazingly graphic fashion. However, despite the impressive gore, the re-working can't compare to D'Amato's film, a personal favorite that maintains a sense of dread not seen any where in *Splatter* version. Still, if you are looking for a healthy dose of video violence, *Anthropomorphicus 2000* should suit you just fine.

— Will Wilson

CITIZEN TOXIC: THE TOXIC AVENGER 4 (2001)**D. Lloyd Kaufman**

105 Minutes



Early on in *Citizen Toxic: The Toxic Avenger 4* there is a scene where the evil version of Sgt. Kabukiman narrowly misses slaughtering an old lady with his car while being chased by the police. Sensing a missed opportunity, Kabukiman tells his passenger, *The Toxic Avenger*, "I can't peel this up," spurs her car around and proceeds to mow the old lady down, leaving her convulsing in a pool of her own blood, shit and urine. That scene sums up this movie perfectly. Just like the aforementioned Kabukiman, director Lloyd Kaufman is gunning it at 120 mph but making sure not going to miss any opportunities.

Trome's latest installment in *The Adventures of New Jersey's only superhero* is one helluva fun and amazingly politically incorrect cinematic ride. Thanks to a huge explosion, Toxic is transported to Tromeville's alternate universe, Antomville, while his evil doppel-ganger, *The Moxious O'Hender* leads in Tromeville. Naturally, all hell breaks loose. Moving a

mile a minute, this installment sees Trome enter the new millennium in manual style. As always, nothing is sacred with ample helpings of rape, sex and death. Also, always the pioneer, Kaufman tackles such new taboos as retarded and abortion with fearless enjoyment. Hell, what do you expect from a film where one of the main characters is a lynched black man's severed head? If there is a downside to the madness, it may be that the film runs a bit too long. Now, I loved each and every minute of it, but with Kaufman consulting the viewer with jokes every few seconds, things do tend to get tiring after a while. The cast is exceptional, with Michael Radering stealing the show as Tico, the Rebel Retard. Celebrity cameos include the likes of Casey Feldman, Rick Jarman, Lemmy and Mark, the Angry Drunken Dwarf (see God!). If modern cinema is ever able to capture insanity on film, it may look something like this.

— Will Wilson

VERUS (2000)**D. Ryudai Kusunoki**

115 Minutes



"There are 666 people that connect this world to the other side. These are casted from all human beings. Somewhere in Japan exists the 666th portal... The forest of resurrection." So reads the opening scroll for *Verus*. Trapped in these woods are an escaped prisoner, several Yakuza members, and a girl caught between the two. With a relationship that extends over several lifetimes, the prisoner must combat the Yakuza leader and his thugs, all the while trying to avoid the recently risen dead.

Overlaid with enough energy for 10 movies, *Verus* is non-stop, high-energy cinematic trip that grabs you from the opening scroll or leaves you hanging in its debt. It is fast, gory and picks power behind its tale. Many have complained that *Verus* is minimal in the plot department, mainly being an extended chase within the woods. However, would this bother film I know. And like that other film, it can be argued that *Verus* is an occasion in visual style rather than narrative nuance. Debating how far Kusunoki keeps the action moving steadily with forced camerawork and swift editing. Given the film's low budget (roughly \$200,000), the slick

production is all the more impressive. The light scenes are astounding, lit out in reality and not the computer-enhanced world. Characterizations between fists, swords and gun with great frequency. This is not a bunch of guys trying to play *The Matrix* in the forest, as some would lead you to believe. A rocking excursion into samurai cinema that deftly alternates between gun and greatsword. Versus is the zombie film for the new millennium.

- Will Wilson

MARK OF THE ASTRO ZOMBIES (2001)

Q: Ted V. Mikels
88 Minutes



Holy shit...Tara

Setena grew to fit her title! Ted V. Mikels returns to the scene to make a short-on-video

"Outlaw" version of the beloved *Astro Zombies*. Most DVD features have lots playing extra, but this may be the first one to be shot by senior citizens. Feeling like a public-access cable broadcast of an elderly Rec Center's Halloween Party, it's a gothic mix of intrigue, outer-space creatures (there... make the Power Rangers monsters look pretty fucking good), Tara Setena vamping (and asking her spiky hair through semi-poor hairdo) throat - gory and goofy at one time, and all the telephone conversations you can stand. However, I'll give Mikels big props for doing this, showing that age hasn't dimmed his balls even if the gray hairs are showing a lot. He certainly does more to let his cool looking AstroZombies do their thing - and that thing is marches swinging and shoving. Even the kids aren't safe. Can the stars defeat the AstroZombies makers? Will the upside-down Skarpe machines really suck out your blood? Is this a bigheaded doll of Brinks Starnes or really her? All that gets answered (at great detail...with extra "unnecessary" for emphasis) in MOTAZ. Show your love and get it from Ted direct!

- David Zubeck

NIGHTMARE (2000)

(aka HORROR MOVIE GAME)
Q: GAWW
87 Minutes



5

The Konrads sure are making some sick fuckin' these days, and GAWW is no exception. But after you slip on the surface

there is nothing underneath. A bunch of puke with a secret (uh oh) are haunted by the ghost of a girl that they sent out of their club...perhaps a lot too literally. She equates and speaks (and weeps that trademark Ring harp) (uh oh) if you positively (or negatively) need to see every frame in trouble film, you could do worse, but you could do much better. And hey, there are better movies about videotapes and ghosts out there you could chase down. GAWW is well-crafted garbage though, and it shows (at least some countries care to make even the lowest movies look really damn good...)

- David Zubeck

VISION Q (2001)

Directed by Takashi Miike
84 Minutes



4

Terms of Endearment gets its doors knocked off the hinges and every hole violated in film + Vids replete Takashi Miike's masterpiece of dysfunction. Get bunge Daughter (in the first minute of the film), but she isn't happy with her finishing power. Son beats mom bloody - and her John, since she has to look for more money, live her scene. Dad exploits son getting bullied, and needs to prove his testicular worth on his murdered mistress. Along comes Victor Q to fix things - by beating dad with a fucking rock - repeatedly. The path to feminist bliss is mopped out with fecal lubrication, crotch-binging, heroin shooting for dick-shrinking purposes, no-rick exposures, and slippery orgasms in a sleep you in the mouth-style only Miike could use. Not horror, but shock cinema that is funny, grotesque, and, goddamnit - fucking learn the lessons Q can teach or he might show up at your door, with a big fucking rock. Shot on video as part of the "Love Cinema" series but don't let that put you off...this is real "Outlaw" cinema. Hell, I'd sell it.

- David Zubeck

AT GAWW THEY SLEEP (2000)

Q: Brian Peulin
80 Minutes



10

A drug-dead? duo of dorks are turned into vamps by played-off toilet seats half bent on elevating our planet for themselves. Naturally, our newly initiated Tamble Two then proceeds to rip up a few religious figures and burn down

a miniature church before annihilating the other local canine in some half-baked nightgits. (Last time I checked, jumper's around like a bullhorn and knicker's shit over doesn't constitute action choreography.) Then, a demon comes, and people pretend like they're flying, and a fire breeds water, and a girl masturbates. All right, maybe I stopped paying studio attention after a while...

My biggest problem with *At Gaww They Sleep* is that it really could rock the house had a little more originality been tossed into the mix and more time been spent editing dialogue scenes up (they're filmed like porno). Also, I don't mind if you find your inspiration in the films we all know and love (see *The Convent* for proof that it CAN work), but to waste a dialogue scene practically verbatim from *The Prophecy* is just lame. And directors, listen. If you're not right for the part, don't play it. How the hell am I supposed to believe that a short, pudgy red-head with a neo-mafiat is a suave ladies man and dope kingpin? Oh yeah, that's right - I OOMT! For what it's worth there are some gleefully explicit places for you geeksheads out there, and a few scenes Q actually has a bit of flair to them (which saved this from the dreaded Q ring), but all in all it's a missed opportunity. And for those of you who had hoped Peulin might improve with subsequent outings, his most recent feature was the imbecile *T-A* (a whiffy *Murphy* *Reider*, which was apparently filmed in someone's garage - Bruce Holmbeck

THE OTHERS (2001)

Q: Alejandro Amenabar

101 Minutes



0

A pet wife and mother (Nicole Kidman in an incredible performance - the polar opposite of her role in *Moulin Rouge*) wars with her two children for the return of her husband at the end of World War II. She instructs her attentive house servants to protect her children against direct sunlight, and locks them up in their gloomy, hermetic mansion without sunlight. The children begin to hear and see other mysterious beings ("the others" of the title) and clues to begin to pile up. The family's carefully maintained facade crumbles crashing down with the removal of the home's heavy draperies, and

the unforgiving sunlight throws dark secrets into bold relief.

The much publicized "surprise ending" was apparent to a lot of genre-savvy folks who saw the trailer. The *Others* is not as much about the revelations at the film's conclusion, but rather on how we see what we most fear. Audiences were lined up around the block for this low-budget horror movie without special effects and action sequences the week of the terrorist attacks on Washington and New York. On this basis, a far greater analysis on *The Others* is in order.

- Greg Goodall

RING (1998)

Q: Denzô Kin
95 Minutes



3

A cursed videotape that results in death to all who view it leads a woman to investigate the circumstances surrounding a dead psychic. She gets more than what she bargained for when she uncovers evidence of necromancy, horrifying child abuse... wait. The phone is ringing. Ring is a masterful film that lulls the viewer into a trance-like state with slow, deliberate rhythms only to shock them over the head with sharp shocks. The much-eyed Japanese speaker is worthy of its reputation, full of surprise and an atmosphere of inquiring dread. People who have seen Ring have kept much on its plot details, but two scenes are especially noteworthy. One features a living ensemble scored to upbeat music that becomes a scene of unbearable horror and disgust. The other, a twist conclusion that rudely stretches away the viewer's opinion of the film's genre-narrative. Already inspiring some so-so sequels and prequels, audiences for subtle horror will find that this film rings true.

- Greg Goodall

THE NAMELESS (1996)

(aka LOS SIN NOMBRES)

Q: Jaime Beltrame

102 Minutes



2

What a witless-out nut-job this is! Based on a novel by UK author Ramsey Campbell, the *Nameless* deals with a woman whose child is believed brutally murdered by a bizarre cult. Years later, after her husband has left over the ordeal, she receives a phone call from her thought-to-be-dead daughter. She quickly connects the

RABID, DRUG-INFESTED HIPPIES
ON A BLOOD-CRAZED KILLING SPREE!

I DRINK YOUR BLOOD

Wacky lord David Dastmalchian
leads with a little force and pace
— Joe Dante,
director of THE HOWLING

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detective that originally handled the case and together, with the help of a belated reporter, they try to find the truth of what happened to the girl. In the process, they encounter a preachy-religious cult with a thing for tortures, called The Nameless.

Directed with an eye for capturing the devastated look of *Seven*, director Juzei Baleguro has created a film that by all rights should be scaring the shit out of everyone on the side of the Atlantic. With a style employing dark lighting and visually subliminal quick-cuts, Baleguro keeps the viewer watching the film to the point that you won't blink for fear of missing something. The editing is top rate also, especially the mother and the leader of the cult group. A little light on the scene, there are some evil visuals on display in the quick-cuts, a brutal video of the cult at work, and a truly nasty looking *Aftermath*-esque corpse at the beginning of the film. If I have one criticism, it would be that the final act wasn't carried out as far as it could've been, then again, the last fifteen minutes are so tension-filled as a gun to the head! This is not a gore movie, but if you're looking for a film with atmosphere and story to back, and want to be truly creeped out, *The Nameless* will do the job.

- Linn Haynes

KURO (2001)

aka FUJIB

D: Kiyoshi Kurosawa

118 Minutes



If there's one film in Japanese cinema threatening to beat the hell out of the *Ring* series and carve it's own niche as the current belle of Asian horror, it's the mindfuck from director Kiyoshi Kurosawa. A group of young students find a friend dead after they come to retrieve a computer disc from his house. They discover a link to a strange website on the net, showing webcams of rooms with shadowy figures walking around and text reading: "Would you like to meet a ghost?" They suspect the site has something to do with their friend committing suicide and as they start researching the site, people suddenly start to disappear.

Kurosawa (no relation) is fast becoming the ultimate director of Japanese horror. From his earlier *Here, the Sweet Here and Gone*, to this,

his latest, he's become one of the few Japanese directors able to deliver the goods time and time again. *Kare* has good acting, story, and cuts a few "girl under skin and crawl around" moments that will leave you thinking about it for days afterward. On top of that, there's one stunt involving a tall building and a girl that will leave you mouth hanging open! With this film, Kurosawa has made a horror film for the internet times and has pulled off a trick that few directors manage, he takes a horror story and GOES AS FAR AS YOU CAN WITH IT!

- Linn Haynes

UZUMAKI (2000)

aka SPIRAL, aka VORTEX

D: Higuchinsky

91 Minutes



Ever wonder what would happen if David Lynch went on a cocaine binge in Japan and decided to make a film for Toho? Well, neither, but I'll be damned if I didn't find out what the movie would look like after watching this film! When a man with a fixation on spiral designs in the town of Kurusawa dies in a VERY strange way, all bets are off, as a young schoolgirl named Kiko (Riko Hirose) tries to keep her head above the weirdness as people start to die and things start to change.

Based on manga by Junji Ito of *Tenji* fame, it's a case to see something so original and fucked up coming out of the land of the rising sun! The film has a few scary scenes early on that don't fit into the whole scheme of things, but give the film a "spiral" quality. I think the director was looking for. After the first ten minutes, it's all spiraling carnage, gore, and sensually scary imagery only the Japanese seem to be able to pull off now. To give too much away would be criminal, but Higuchinsky has created the strangest film I've ever seen, and that is saying something! Go start this novel! - Linn Haynes

WEHNGO (2001)

D: Larry Fenderson

91 Minutes



Not to be confused with that creaky Thorne put out a few years ago by the same name, but rather the kick-ass feature from Larry Fenderson who is best known for his midday-day cinematic trypt into dementia, *Mel!* A divorced family heads up to a friend's mountain cabin for the

weekend in hopes of salvaging what is left of their lives. Along the way, they run into the town's baddest, Ota, who seems bent on harassing the shit out of them. As the cold winter air lend a hand to get the fuck away from each other, they decide to make a trip into town for supplies. While in the local thrift shop, little Miles meets a mysterious man who gives him a wooden figure of the Indian spirit known as Wendigo. Now the fun is about to start! Right? Wrong! Just when you think Miles is going to release the slightly beast on the town's bully, his act of whoop-ass comes out a little flat, all leading to a very disappointing and pretty much gore-less ending. The film is just an okay-far-far re-off of the *Pumpkinhead* tale without any guts.

- John Wheelman

ED GEN (2000)

aka UNDER THE LIGHT OF THE MOON

D: Chuck Parello

89 Minutes



It seems as if American will never tire of hearing about their eternal bogymen Ed Gen (Steve Railsback) was considered a mildly retarded bachelor farmer by his immediate neighbors in Maryland, Wisconsin. He lived alone at the farmhouse he had grown up in. His abusive parents had long since passed on and his brother had vanished under mysterious circumstances. What the townspeople didn't know was that Gen had a complex personal life. Self-educated from lurid detective magazines and esoteric journals on Nazi atrocities, Gen formulated a sense of angular beliefs to deal with his mundane existence. Bewitched by a puritanical mother (Circé Svodgrass), Gen renounced the female sex and instead sought to become one. Fascinated by the Christine Jorgensen case, he knew his resources for sexual reassignment surgery were limited. So he did the next best thing: filching graves from a nearby cemetery, he fashioned a female sex from the corpse of recently deceased middle-aged women and deeded under the light of the moon (the film's original title). Adorning to a wicker nest, weird not weird, he used bits of human flesh and bone for home decor such as soup bowls made from human skulls and a bath made from lips.

The not-too-bright Gen would stumble and fall when his activities began to include murder, and was arrested shortly after the murders of a feminist and a shopkeeper. Authorities uncovered Gen's chthonic house of horrors, and angry villagers burned the house down to the ground at the time of his trial. Gen passed away in 1984 in a mental institution, his place for a trip around the world pending his release never realized.

Gen has spawned countless nightmares and fictitious characters, Norman Bates in *Psycho* (1960), the family from *Fear* (Charles Massacre (1974), and Buffalo Bill from *Silence of the Lambs* (1991) chief among them. The reason is obvious: Gen, in a psychotic way, symbolizes the American ideal of pursuing life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness as long as it doesn't include killing your neighbor and devouring their flesh. Americans staunchly believe in keeping private affairs private while being simultaneously obsessed by what may be occurring next door. Gen certainly represents a worst case scenario.

Shot on a less-than-spectacular budget, Ed Gen offers up nothing to those familiar with the case. It's interesting that Steve Railsback served as the executive producer. It appears that Railsback kept at the cinema to play yet another American monster after performing delirious portrayal of Charles Manson in the TV movie *Heavenly Creatures* (1978). Those who want an infinitely better cinematic interpretation of the black footnote in American history are advised to seek out the briefly feature *Deranged* (1974), starring Robert Bloembergen in the Gen role who would later go on to fame and fortune as Old Man Marley in *Alone Alone* (1990).

- Greg Goodell

"Gen, in a psychotic way, symbolizes the American ideal of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, as long as it doesn't include killing your neighbor and devouring their flesh."

CLUE DEAD (2000)D: Miles Bowler
111 Minutes**3**

Shot on video and rather dark in it's overall look, *Clue Dead* may not be to all tastes. It is long at almost 2 hours, and relatively bloodless compared to similar micro-budget offerings.

The plot concerns a trio of cheap newspaper reporters investigating the sinister Mr. Ex, an all-black figure who sells out living businesses by offering them wealth in return for their souls. He works for "The Corporation" - a mysterious computer-led organization that closely monitors anyone that dares to question Ex's policies.

Concerning it's plot on a health care chance the odd, this plays as a very attack on the current ongoing obsession with physical perfection - and the lengths some folk will go to achieve it. It also comments upon the dangers of computer controlling society en masse.

But this is overlong, not nearly gory enough, and plagued by boring, dark stalk scenes that go on forever, and culminates not in gore, but jump cuts to yet more dialogue (all which there seems to be A LOT).

There's a decent axe-in-the-chest scene, and when a knife enters an informant's head later in the film I suddenly realized I was still awake.

Having said that, this has intelligent dialogue and is stylishly shot. The performances are generally strong too. Kudos then to the film makers for not subscribing to the usual gore-for-gore's-sake formula - but a little more of the red stuff would've been nice, considering that meanness running time - Stuart Willis

DRIVE-IN (2000)Directed by Chuck Debus
80 Minutes**5**

What could possibly be worse than this generic Hollywood slasher flicks from the last couple of years? How about the direct-to-video releases that try to be carbon copy imitations with a fraction of the budget and half the brains? *Drive-In* is such a film. With no plethora of ultra-hip teens spouting endless clichés about

horror films, it is nothing more than another annoying postscript to the Screen era.

The film centers around Billy, a half-wit trapped in a hulking body. Living on the outskirts of a drive-in theatre, Billy ingests a steady diet of horror time, resulting in his already unbalanced brain snapping like a toothpick and the subsequent killing spree. To make matters worse, Billy's mother is a City Council woman who wants the drive-in closed and Billy's father just happens to be the drive-in's owner. Oh, the drama!

Destitely dull and poorly acted, the only thing this flick has going for it is the Theme inserts showing at the drive-in. Choice highlights include such better flicks as *Rebel Genies*, *Terror Flinger*, and *Monster in the Closet*. The film also displays a contradictory sense of logic, as they try to show Billy as the product of cinematic violence while delivering a mindless slasher flick. Not that I expected that much thought to go into this. On screen death is kept to a minimum, keeping the gore level down. Given such an evocative location as a drive-in, you think they could do better. Give us *Drive-In Messiahs* any day over this rubbish - Will Wilson

JEEPERS CREEPERS (2001)D: Victor Salva
90 Minutes**6**

A lacking brother and sister combo hit the backroads to head home during college semester break. Their encounter a mysterious cloaked figure on the road, who turns out to be a cannibalistic gargoyle from beyond time. Sniffing the hero's soiled jockey shorts (GAH!), it decides it's Gerta Have Him, leading to a terrifying pursuit and a downright conclusion. *Jeepers Creepers* has been the subject of much undue controversy stemming from the fact that writer-director Victor Salva is much more well known for things other than writing and directing. So much of it seems like sour grapes - had we more morale pulled what Salva did, would WE still be able to film our own creature feature, let alone have Frankie Ford Coppola finance it? That out of the way, *Jeepers Creepers* is an adequate monster mash with a very unnecessary subplot. - Greg Goodsell

GINGER SNAPS (2000)D: John Fawcett
108 Minutes**8**

When we first meet Ginger and Brigitte Fitzgerald (Emily Perkins and Katherine Isabelle), we're quick to write them off as typically apologetic teenagers. Hiding their budding adolescence through layers of Goth clothing, the sisters photograph apocalyptic death scenes for school art projects. All it not well in their tract: loving project: Ginger is attacked by a wild animal one night and her wounds mysteriously heal before the two can seek medical attention. A radical change comes over Ginger. She begins to express an interest in boys and begins dressing better in addition to assuming a lycine tail. Poor Brigitte is torn apart by seeing her sister succumbing to the ravages of *skinthrob AND lycanthropy*, and soon discovers there's nothing remotely romantic or humorous about violent death.

As this chamber symphony proves, *Ginger Snaps* is clever but none too subtle. The movie moves at a snail pace, but grinds to a halt when it calls attention to its witness. The special effects leave a great deal to be desired. The werewolves have fixed, rubbery expressions and should have relied on more subtlety and suggestion to camouflage their shortcomings.

Ginger Snaps chief coup is the casting of Mel Rogers as the girls' mother. Rogers would distinguish herself in the big-budget features as *Someone to Watch over Me* (1987) as well as the cult classic *The Reluctant* (1993) before fading into supporting roles in mostly minor fare. Rogers cheerfully ignores how her domestic existence is falling into ruin amidst a growing body count. While memorably ditzy, this reviewer wishes she would have gone on to more substantial roles than these akin to the Aunt Mirtha character in *Stepsway Camp* (1983) - Greg Goodsell

JOY RIDE (2001)D: Jehi Dahl
98 Minutes**5**

College student Paul Walker drives cross-country to pick up girlfriend Leesa Sobers. Along the way, he picks up his ne'er-do-well brother

Steve Zahn, fresh from prison. Although they have less than \$100 between them, the boys decide to add a deceptic CD radio to their car for the express purpose of faking with truckers. Walker loses the amiously named "Rusty Nail" to a seedy motel room with the promise of sexy sex by imitating a woman's voice (hmm... sounds like he has some unresolved issues there). Our heroes find out quickly they've picked the wrong big rig jockey as he begins his relentless pursuit against the terrified trio. Seeing as the protagonists repeatedly leave innocent bystanders to die horrible deaths and fail to let authorities despite being given countless opportunities, it's tempting to call *Joy Ride* a scathing indictment against the thoughtlessness of the younger generation masquerading as a thriller. Either that, or they were stuck with a B+ or A- script. This film reportedly sat on the shelf for a couple of years, one can almost hear a studio exec saying at a screening, "Eh... can't we push this one back for another six months?" - Greg Goodsell

ROCK 'N' ROLL FRANKENSTEIN (1999)D: Brian O'Hara
88 Minutes**8**

Ever since James Whale's *Frankenstein*, Hollywood has attempted (with very little success) to compare up anything new and original when dealing with the man's obsession to be God. Well, if those schmucks can't get it right maybe the world of underground cinema can, as look as further than the sexually challenged *Rock 'n' Roll Frankenstein*.

Music agent Bernie Stein has just about had it, so he decides to enlist the help of his nephew Frankie in hopes of making a rock star. With Iggy and his band of misfits on the case, the remains of legendary rockers (from Jimmy Hendrix's head to Sid Vicious' sex to Elvin's) stardom's sideburns begin to disappear around the world. Just as Frank is about to give his creation life, Bernie realizes that his newest prodigy is missing the most important component and quickly engineers the gang to secure it. Trouble comes when Iggy accidentally destroys the love life of Jim Morrison and you can only guess who's coming to dinner.

With his new life in hand, the "long" begins to struggle with an overabundance of talent, as well as some unusual urges. This all leads to a wild pseudo-psychic battle between the big and the little head where no hole is safe. As his star power and sex appeal begins to skyrocket, so does his craving for dingberrries.

Rock 'n' Roll Frankenstein is a bizarre and stimulating mix between *Rocky Horror* and *Young Frankenstein*. It takes the Frankenstein mythos, modernizes it, slices it firmly on its axis (literally), and brings life to a once-bred franchise. Director Brian Koppelman's well-crafted homage to bed taste reaches a new level of explicit execution as it thrives inside all political correctness in the name of entertainment. **John Wheatman**

JASON X (2002)
D: James Isaac
83 Minutes

Twenty-plus years into the Friday the 13th game and here comes the 10th installment of the series in the form of Jason X. Seeing the need for change, the filmmakers throw out the tired old stalk-in-slash at a camp routine in favor of the groundbreaking idea of stalk-in-slash in a space station. Oh, the originality.

Oh, I won't bore you with a drawn-out plot synopsis. Jason is cryogenically frozen, discovered 400 years later by alien students, is brought into their apocalyptic, wake up and begin killing. Pretty standard F13 stuff really. To think that "screenwriter" Todd Farmer actually got credit for writing this is a joke. Basically, he wrote a copy of Jason Cameron's Alien script, earning his keep by changing the names. It is the ultimate in cinematic plagiarism, a sad, common reality in today's movie market. I suggest Farmer check out Tom McLoughlin's script for *Jason Lives* for an example of how to be inferential without being a no-off artist. Jason's screen direction doesn't fare much better. After a very stylish opening (which got my hopes very up), the film falls completely flat. There is little style on display and the film comes off looking like an episode of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. The performances are fine, albeit the screen is littered with only good-looking side in this

post-Scream era. I want my fat guy back, damn it! Then again, what can you say about a film where the last onscreen performance is delivered by a cut-dredder in a brief cameo appearance.

Now, onto what the fans really care about, the body count. The film does contain an amazingly high body count, but the deaths are hardly the most impressive of the series. In fact, one of the highly touted liquid nitrogen death, is a pretty standard, machete through the stomach stuff. Maybe I am just getting older (or weird) but this film bored me. Granted, it is better than the last two entries in the series, but that isn't really saying much as those proved to be two of the worst. The series surely needed a boost but this is definitely not it. I never thought I would say the about a F13 film, but be fuckin' cognizant for sweet. **Will Wilson**

IN THE WOODS (1999)
D: Lynn Dzick
90 Minutes

While on a hunting trip, two firefighters uncover when appears to be an ancient burial site. Naturally, they dig it up and unleash an unstoppable monster. With an indecipherable link from the past to one of our heroes, Alex, the monster drops off body parts at his home, leading him directly in the middle of a murder investigation. Trying to elude both the cops and the creature, Alex must prove his innocence, while at the same time trying to salvage his marriage.

In the Woods is unfortunately a mixed bag. On one hand, the low-budget film is technically impressive. From the opening shot, writer/director Lynn Dzick shows his capable command of the camera, employing elaborate steadicam shots. The filmmakers go all out, utilizing several major location, special effects and even pyrotechnics. Unfortunately, a weak script and even weaker acting undermines these superb technical elements. The script, although highly ambitious for an independent production, attempts unrealistically between the lead's inner and outer demons, resulting in an unfocused final product. Dzick touches on several major themes, but ultimately fails to elaborate on them. The one admirable aspect

of the script is the ordinary guys vs. extraordinary forces set-up, achieving such stellar results as the *Phantom* series. Jim Griffith is very good as the put upon friend Wayne. Su Perry, as the lead Alex, is not. His delivery is somewhat stiff and he never convincingly conveys the inner turmoil his character is going through. Dzick shows enough fear behind the camera for me to anticipate a second feature, he just needs to make sure he takes equal care of what is going on in front of the camera. For more information, visit <http://www.woods4ed.com/katherine@pictures.html>. **Will Wilson**

HITCHHIKE (1977)
D: Pasquale Festa Campanile
104 Minutes

Containing more sizzle to please per second than the last twenty Hollywood "thrillers," *Hitchhike* is a superb, seductive piece of Italian cinema that should be of particular note for sizzle fans for the psychotic performance from resident cinematic maniac David Hass.

Franco Nero stars as a drunk of a reporter on vacation with his wife in America. With a marriage that screams of dysfunction, it appears the most horrific part of this trip for this couple will be spending endless hours in the car together. That is until David Hass thumbs a ride. On the run with two million dollars, Hass makes himself at home in the backseat of the family car. Before you can yell *The Hitchhiker*, everyone starts playing mind games. Nero wants Hass dead. Hass wants Nero's wife dead. The wife, naturally, wants both men dead.

What a fun film begins with a shot of a husband bring up his unimpressive wife in his wife's kitchen, you know it is not going to be a pretty picture. All of the film's characters are complete asshole, with the least potent one (Nero) garnering little sympathy after the rape of his wife in the opening 5 minutes. Nero is exceptional as the booze-swilling gal. From beginning to end, you hate the guy. Equally impressive on the sizzle-a-meter is Hass. Then again, given his sadistic turn in *Last House on the Left*, the type of stuff should come relatively easy. When he's not blabbing away, he's shooting or raping. Perverse highlights include Hass throwing his two

partners off a cliff in a truck and forcing a tied up Nero to watch as he rapes his wife. **Will Wilson**

SESSION 9 (2001)
D: Brad Anderson
100 Minutes

"Scary as Hell" as declared one critic about *The Blair Witch Project*. Excuse me! Perhaps that clueless reviewer should check out *Session 9*, a truly scary exercise in low-budget cinematic damns. Director Brad Anderson, premier (or know for remakes) comedian, imparts an atmospheric and bone-chilling vision with *Session 9*, his film about a five man reformatory crew cleaning up an abandoned mental hospital. Feeling more on chills than gut spits, the film harks back to the period where psychological movies were far more threatening than onscreen violence. The screenplay, written by Anderson and actor Stephen Geveden, leads the viewer down several divergent paths and is excellent. As the story unfolds and bodies begin to drop, the claustrophobic tension mounts in levels not reached onscreen since a Carpenter's *The Thing*. A lot of this is due to the film's biggest asset, the real life abandoned mental facility, which apparently was the inspiration for the script. It is an intimidating and frightening structure that no scenic designer could ever construct. The film is relatively light for gorehounds, although one scene involving a metal rod and an eyeball is positively gruesome. Unsurprisingly, *Session 9* displays a distinct maturity that, coupled with Anderson's *The Others*, could lend credibility to the horror genre that got knocked on its ass by faithless tripe like *The Blair Witch Project*. **Will Wilson**

"Session 9 displays a distinct maturity that could lend credibility to a genre that got knocked on its ass by faithless tripe like *The Blair Witch Project*."



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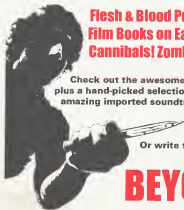
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